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TOM HANSON/CP

EAT YOUR VEGETABLES The Conservative platform isn't bold but it is pragmatic

A comforting recipe for troubled times

Emotion is always a large part of politics. How does a politician make voters feel? It can be the crucial question of an election.

During the current campaign, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has been repeatedly criticized for his lack of empathy. An economist by training, he has apparently failed to connect with the fear and anger Canadians are feeling about stock market losses or factory closures. Emotional coldness is a frequent complaint of Harper, and it has a certain basis in fact. But while the Prime Minister may not be the first person Canadians look to for a hug, he may offer Canadians comfort of another kind. Stability and security can be just as important as having someone feel your pain.

Stability and security are definitely not the hallmarks of the opposition platforms. At a time when stock prices have suffered historic drops, the New Democrats plan to rescind $41 billion in planned corporate tax cuts to pay for a host of grand new social policies. There's to be a $6.5-billion four-year child care plan, a $4.5-billion three-year pharmacare program, a $1-billion per year social housing plan and so on. And considering the party's opposition to free trade, there will be fewer opportunities for Canadian firms to sell their goods and services abroad. None of this bodes well for the stability of the economy, or the budget.

Stéphane Dion's Liberals offer a similar smorgasbord. The Liberal platform plans $16 billion in new spending over the next four years, while relying on rosy projections of government revenue to keep the budget in balance. And at the possible tipping point of a recession, the Green Shift plan is an explicit promise to shake up the Canadian economy by heavily taxing firms already hit hard by global economic forces. This would seem to be a tricky manoeuvre at the best of times, but for Dion it is a matter of faith that we put new and additional focus on the environment at this very moment.

By contrast, the Harper platform, released this week, suffers from a distinct absence of new ideas. There are a few odds and ends for familiar recipients, such as the auto and aerospace sectors, and a tariff reduction for manufacturers. But Harper has eschewed bold promises in favour of continuity and familiarity. He has staked his re-election on the same simple bill of fare that marked his first term in office: low taxes, no deficits and modest spending increases. His platform is certainly no emotional rescue plan, but it seems well-intended to keep the economy on track by avoiding the big tax-and-spend promises that are central to the other parties' platforms. So is this what Canadians want, or need?

The Great Depression saw the introduction of such foods as Campbell's chicken noodle soup, Kraft Dinner and Skippy peanut butter. Simple, inexpensive comfort foods provided needed solace during those tough economic times. With the economy again in some peril, Harper is offering voters a modest but affordable platform designed for a similar sort of comfort. It seems a pragmatic approach to an emotional problem. M

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For letters to the editor
story proposals
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BY PHONE
To comment on the magazine
(416) 764-1706
1-800-268-8118 (ext. 1706)

BY MAIL
Maclean's, 11th floor
One Mount Pleasant Road
Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2Y5

Editorial department
(416) 764-1339
Fax (416) 764-1332

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BY MAIL
Maclean's
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service@macleans.ca

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This week on the Web

Your election-night headquarters

Before and after you vote, get up-to-the-minute analysis from the best team of political writers on the Web. macleans.ca/election



BLOG CENTRAL



ANDREW COYNE
"The Conservatives are not going to get their majority, the Liberals are not going to win, the NDP is not going to replace the Liberals, and the Green party is here to stay"
macleans.ca/coyne



SAVAGE WASNINGTON
"There are two moods in the U.S. people concerned the U.S. has lost respect in the world, who want to be loved, and those who feel a certain defiance in the face of criticism of America"
macleans.ca/savage



INKLESS WELLS
"I'd suggest that in some ways there is a party to the free-market side of Harper, and it's led by the geeky prof with the stylin' new glasses" macleans.ca/wells



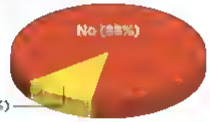
FESCHUK ON THE FAMOUS
"You think you've seen John McCain's ornery side before? Nobody puts (person who was a) Baby (125 years ago) in a corner"
macleans.ca/feschuk

COMMENT OF THE WEEK

"The bigger question is whether the Republicans will secretly switch Tina Fey for Sarah Palin. Then Sarah can do SNL. Or is that what she is already doing?"
—Kentrol on TV Guidance

WEB POLL RESULTS

Did tha dabatas change how you plan to vote?



THIS WEEK'S POLL: macleans.ca/poll

OPENING WEEKEND



Brian D. Johnson
Web-only reviews of *Happy-Go-Lucky* and *Body of Lies*, which stars Russell Crowe and Leonardo DiCaprio.
macleans.ca/unscreened

NEW BLOG



The Green Room
Alexandra Shimo, assistant editor at *Maclean's* and author of *The Environment Equation*, launches her environment blog this week
macleans.ca/greenroom

BACKGROUND CHECK



Comparing resumés
Chances are, one of these men will be your prime minister. It's your last chance to see how they measure up
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MACLEAN'S

PUBLISHER
KENNETH WHYTE

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Julie Oshanne

Advertising Sales
Toronto (416) 764-3500
adsales@macleans.ca

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Western Canada (604) 739-9925
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'What's happened to the Liberals? Canadians have outgrown them. Canada has changed.'

HOME SWEET HOME

LIKE YOUR WRITER Jason Kirby in his article about the storm brewing in Canada's real estate market ("It could happen here too," Business, Oct 6), many economists look across the border, see a hurricane, and declare, "It could happen here too!" Well no, it won't happen here—a windstorm maybe, but no hurricane. Why? For one thing, there's no big price balloon to prick. Also, Canadians are more conservative in their willingness to take on debt, which reduces the probability of homebuyers who are overloaded with debt dumping their houses on the market. We do not have low, "teaser" rates on mortgages that reset at a higher level after one or two years, causing missed mortgage payments and ultimately foreclosures. What's more, the Canadian banks are more disciplined in extending credit. This is probably because our banks keep a lot of mortgage debt on their books and hence have to live with any problems they create. Our housing markets will always rise and fall, but more due to macro fundamentals in our economy, not because of almost criminally lax behaviours such as those seen in the U.S.

Brian K. Johnson, President, Monarch Corporation, Toronto

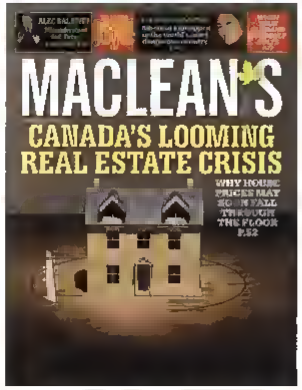
YOUR ARTICLE about Canada's real estate market is another example of fear mongering and media sensationalism that offers little relevance to current real estate market conditions here in Canada. The fact is, tighter lending practices exist for Canadians than in the U.S., and that has resulted in a much more stable banking and financial environment in Canada overall. A high inventory of homes available in recent years, our strong economic performance, and attractive yet prudently managed lending practices have helped to fuel housing sales activity in recent years. Unless our economy shrinks drastically and/or interest rates spike significantly, there is no reason to think that real estate market conditions in general will not remain stable for the foreseeable future.

Rick Crouch, President, Georgian Triangle Real Estate Board, Collingwood, Ont.

WHY MEN CHEAT

I DIDN'T KNOW whether to laugh or rip my hair out when I read Julia McKinnell's article about straying husbands ("How to prevent him from cheating," Help, Sept. 29). Not only is she giving husbands an excuse to cheat, but she is also telling them who to blame. God forbid a man doesn't hear how wonderful he is when he manages to pick up his own underwear. Usually when a man complains that his wife doesn't appreciate him, it's because she is too busy trying to juggle being a wife, mother, full-time career woman, maid, and now his personal cheerleader. The real reason a husband cheats is because he is so self-absorbed that he isn't able to think about anyone but himself. He isn't able to look around and appreciate the things he already has in his life. This article doesn't tell us how to stop a man from cheating, it tells us, once again, that women are to blame.

Jane McGrath, Fredericton



"UNDERAPPRECIATED" husbands who don't properly communicate their needs before feeding them with something so toxic as cheating are perhaps the ones who need the advice, not we women.

Jennifer Menheere, Bright's Grove, Ont.

I FOUND your article on men cheating very interesting and, I must say, quite persuasive. I have something to add based on my experience as a clinical psychologist who works with couples and infidelity. When the men mentioned in your article were asked why they had begun an affair, they answered, "Because I felt unappreciated by my wife." There's no surprise in this. The bigger issue is why these men have such an overpowering need to be appreciated and cared about—so big, in fact, that it led to them contravening their marriage vows to get that need met. There are huge numbers of men in Canada and the U.S. who are "father-wounded," which means that they have not received unconditional validation from their fathers and go about trying to compensate for this by seeking the love and appreciation of a good woman, or by competing with others for power and achievement. For the father-wounded man, a time-limited, Band-Aid strategy woefully lacks any healing capacity. What they need is an awareness of the wound, its origins and an understanding of how to heal it in a meaningful way.

John P. Theis, Guelph, Ont.

TOO MATURE TO BE GRIT

YOU SAY THAT the Liberals are being outclassed by the Tories ("What happened to the Liberals?" National, Oct. 5). What has happened to the Liberals is that Canada has changed since the dynasty days of the Liberal party. Some Liberal policies have been extreme and have taken Canada too far to the left. As the old axiom goes, "If you're not a socialist in your 20s then you don't have a heart, but if you're still a socialist in your 40s, you don't have a brain." Canadians have matured and become wary of the Liberals, and have shifted in middle age to a more conservative, middle-of-the-road approach. It's not really what has happened to the Liberals, it's what has happened to Canadians. They've grown a little. The irony is that it has been Liberal policies that have created the Canada in which we find ourselves today.

Douglas Cornish, Ottawa

THE GIFT OF IMMIGRANTS

YOUR EDITORIAL "Open to the world" (From the Editors, Oct. 6) is overly optimistic about the benefits of immigration. The data showing the high proportion of immigrants' offspring who finish university do not indicate the period during which their parents arrived in Canada. Don Drummond, chief economist of the Toronto Dominion Bank, has pointed out that since the early 1980s, immigrants have done less well than either those who came earlier or their Canadian-born peers. As new arrivals fall further behind, Drummond foresees the possibility of an



intergenerational cycle of poverty developing. It should be noted also that even the highly successful immigrants and their children are the principal beneficiaries of their success and, while they increase the size of the economy, the income of the rest of the population remains unchanged. Moreover, because of the large numbers of less successful newcomers, our analyses indicate that in recent decades, immigration overall has become very costly to Canadians.
Martin Collacott and Herbert Grubel, Senior Fellows, The Fraser Institute, Vancouver

IN YOUR EDITORIAL, you say immigrants are a gift the rest of the world gives us, and that we should have more of it. The gift immigrants give us is to adopt our consumptive



'IMMIGRATION is very costly to Canadians'

habits and quadruple their greenhouse gas emissions upon arriving in our country, thereby hastening the timetable of our collective demise. It's time that politicians, developers and cheap labour employers woke up and realized that Canada is a lifeboat and not an aircraft carrier. Despite appearances, we have a limited carrying capacity and we should inventory it before making uneducated guesses about our needs.
Tim Murray, Quathiaski Cove, B.C.

I BELIEVE your editorial missed the point. You say that "earlier this week Statistics Canada reported on the university graduation rates of second-generation immigrants. The results are stunning. Among children of immigrants from China, 70 per cent hold a university degree." You go on to say that this compares to a mere 28 per cent for children of Canadian-born parents. This says more about the lack of education or culture in our own country, and also shows how poorly we deal with our native communities. The solution is not to replace our Canadian-born people with immigrants, but to improve the lives and communities of the people who are already here.
Hans Bosman, Brockville, Ont.

HBO, YIPPEE!

I WAS SO HAPPY to read that HBO is coming to Canada on Oct. 30 (From the Editors, Oct. 6). Yippee! I've already contacted my cable provider in anticipation of the big event. Thanks *Maclean's*!
Wilma Ferguson, Stratford, Ont.

YOU TAKE SOME CREDIT for and express much happiness over the arrival of HBO Canada. In your campaign to have the channel brought to Canada, you gave examples of the fine television viewing that will soon be ours, and mention two recent award-winning films, one about former U.S. president John Adams and the other about the 2000 U.S. presidential election. We all know that U.S. cultural imperialism is alive and well, so why do you champion it further?
David O'Leary, Margaretsville, N.S.

SAUL ON SOUL

JOHN RALSTON SAUL talked about his new book, *A Fair Country*, in his interview with *Maclean's* writer Kate Fillion (Interview, Oct. 6). Saul's look into the Canadian soul misses the mark in his assessment of our health care system. Yes, we control costs by rationing services, but the alternative is skyrocketing tax levels—unless we restructure the delivery model. More doctors, nurses, beds and operating rooms will do nothing to improve the efficiency of a fundamentally flawed system. Any M.B.A. knows you can't decentralize a public service. If we delivered education the way we deliver health care we couldn't afford to educate our kids. So why are we surprised that we can't afford timely health care? If the government had the courage to restructure the delivery model we could do quite well with the doctors we have, serve more patients faster and save enormous amounts of money.
O. Robert Lawrence, North Bay, Ont.

BLEATING AND TAXES

IT WAS AMUSING to read the item on the goats that were imprisoned by police in the Congo after they came upon a man who was selling them illegally ("Congo: Justice for imprisoned goats," World, Sept. 29). It was refreshing to note that the Congo did not start a national registry of goats or even ban ownership of certain species of goats, like we do in Canada in similar situations. If it had happened here in Quebec, our leaders would probably "fix" the problem by taxing the goats for all the trouble they were causing.
Michael Blair, Drummondville, Que.

IN PASSING

Constance Rooke, 65, writer and academic. An editor of the West Coast literary journal *The Malahat Review*, she later co-founded the Eden Mills Writer's Festival with her husband, short-story writer Leon Rooke. Most recently she served as the president of PEN Canada.

Saul Laskin, 90, politician. An alderman and then mayor in one of Thunder Bay's constituent predecessors, Port Arthur, he championed amalgamation with neighbouring Fort William, which became a fact in 1970, and Laskin became the new city's first mayor. Brother to late Supreme Court chief justice Bora Laskin, he also ran a furniture store for many years.

[RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR]

MACLEAN'S
BESTSELLERS
COMPILED BY BRIAN BETHUNE

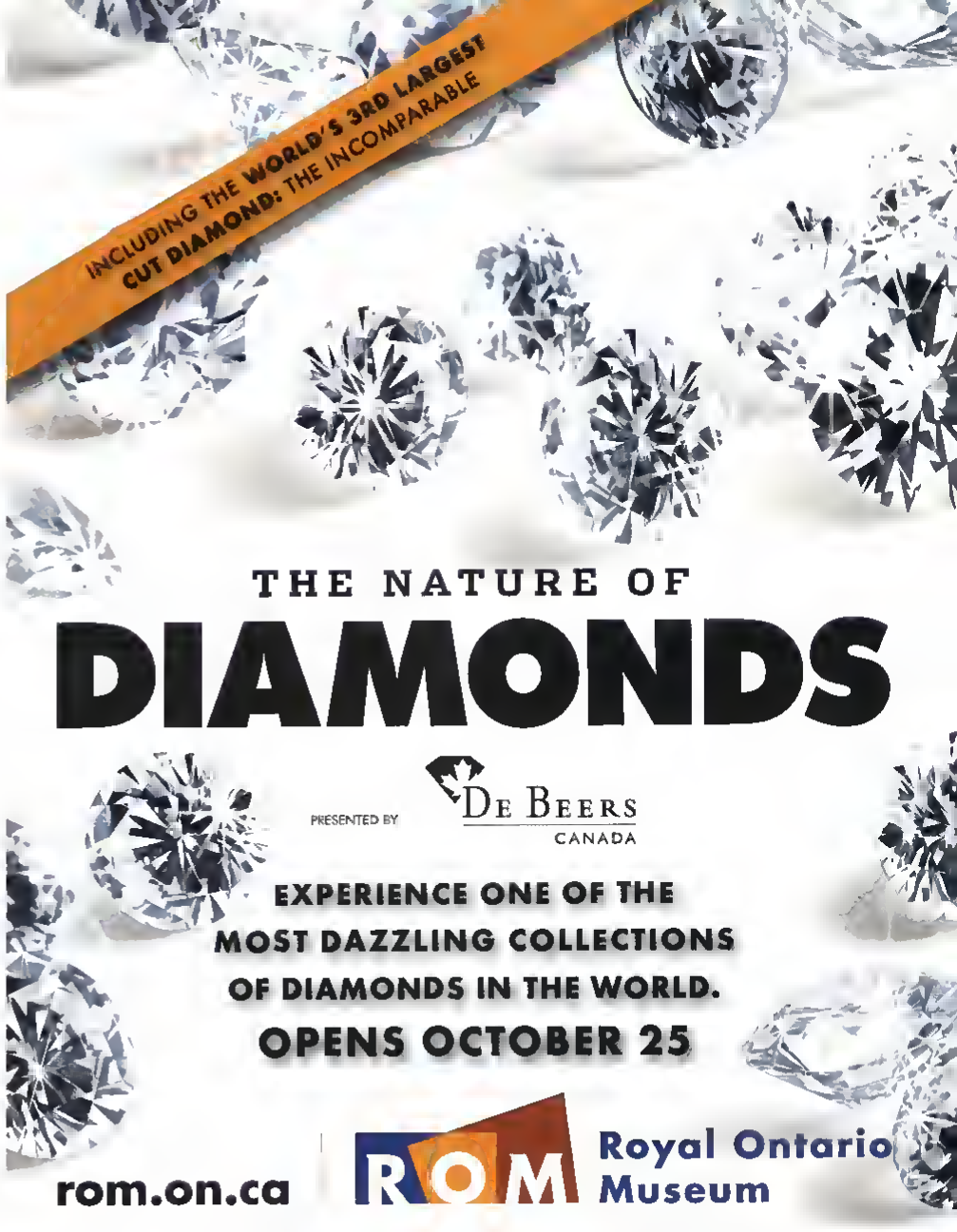
Fiction

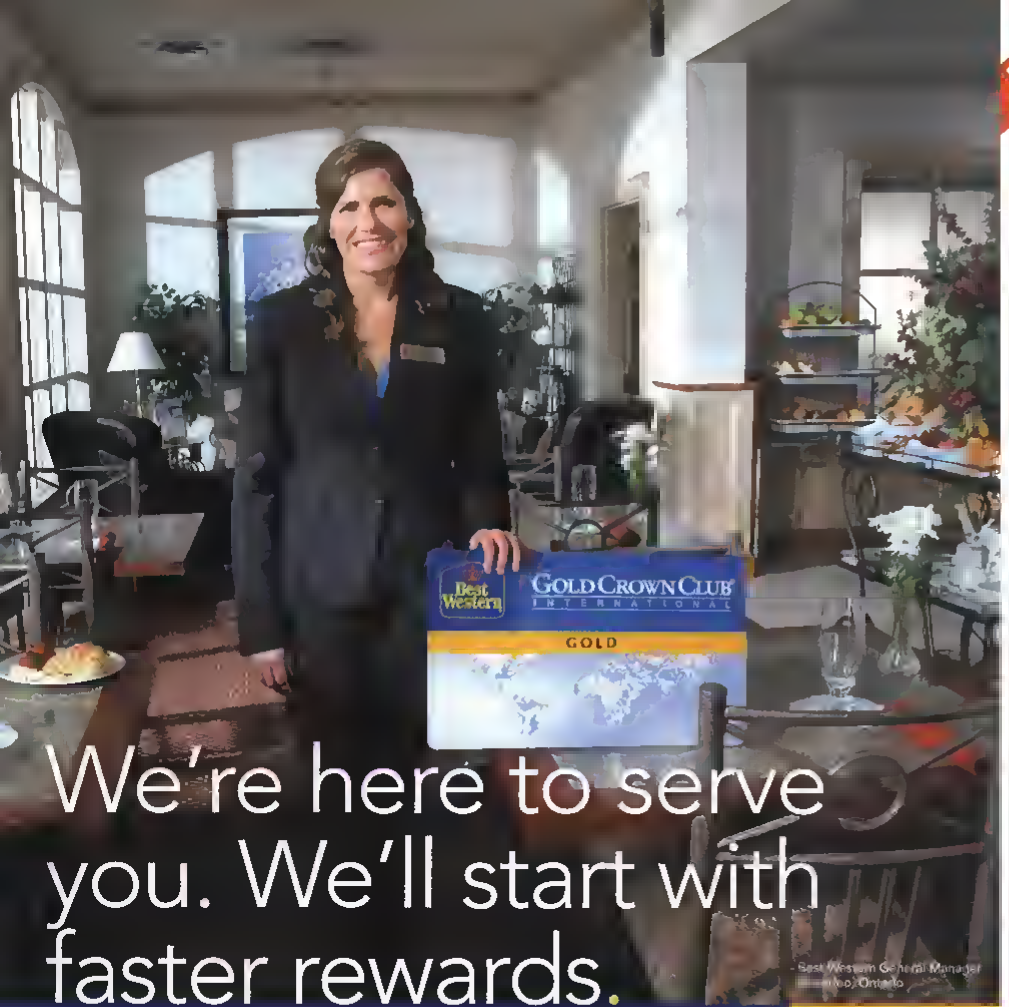
1	THE PRIVATE PATIENT by P.D. James	1 (4)
2	A MOST WANTED MAN by John Le Carre	(1)
3	THROUGH BLACK SPRUCE by Joseph Boyden	8 (5)
4	THE GARGOYLE by Andrew Davidson	10 (7)
5	ALL THE COLOURS OF DARKNESS by Peter Robinson	(1)
6	THE FLYING TROUTMANS by Miriam Toews	2 (5)
7	THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO by Stieg Larsson	5 (2)
8	COVENTRY by Helen Humphreys	3 (5)
9	RED DOG, RED DOG by Patrick Lane	(1)
10	INDIGNATION by Philip Roth	7 (3)

Non-fiction

1	A FAIR COUNTRY by John Ralston Saul	3 (2)
2	NOT, FLAT AND CROWDED by Thomas Friedman	2 (4)
3	THE SNOWBALL by Alice Shroeder	(1)
4	THE GIFT OF THANKS by Margaret Visser	6 (5)
5	WHAT IS AMERICA? by Ronald Wright	1 (7)
6	THE LAST LECTURE by Randy Pausch	5 (10)
7	THE WORLD IN SIX SONGS by Daniel Levitin	9 (6)
8	GHOST TRAIN TO THE EASTERN STAR by Paul Theroux	7 (5)
9	THE WAR WITHIN by Bob Woodward	4 (4)
10	THE $12 MILLION STUFFED SNARK by Don Thompson	(1)

LAST WEEK (WEEKS ON LIST)





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KAREN BLEIER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF O.J. SIMPSON

On Friday, the 61-year-old former football star was convicted of kidnapping and robbery for holding up a group of sports memorabilia dealers. Simpson was held in isolation over the weekend, while his lawyers promised publicly they would file an appeal "five minutes after sentencing." Winning might prove tough: by Monday, jurors were surfacing in the media, insisting the conviction was not by way of punishing Simpson for the 1994 deaths of Nicole Brown and Ron Goldman.

Good news

Kim Jong heal

Last week, U.S. diplomats left North Korea without completing talks on a disarmament-for-aid deal, as Kim Jong Il had suffered a stroke and couldn't handle negotiations. Reports on Dear Leader's health had ranged from "able to brush his own teeth" to "four limbs paralyzed," and while we're loath to wish a dictator well, global peace and security may be at stake. So we welcome news that Kim recently took in a little soccer, watching Kim Il Sung University beat Pyongyang University of Railways 4-1. Here's hoping he makes a comeback, and the two countries soon score a truce.

Hi, I'm Tony Soprano

Dozens of times a year, RCMP officers go undercover in so-called "Mr. Big" stings, where suspects are coaxed by ersatz crime bosses (i.e. cops) to boast about their past misdeeds. This efficient method of extracting confessions most recently resulted in the conviction of 20-year-old Nathan Fry, who killed a mother, three young children and a teenage girl when he burned down a Vancouver home in 2006. The length, expense and fairness of the operations have been the focus of heavy media coverage. Yet somehow they keep working. Good thing, we guess, that criminals don't read newspapers.

Keep smiling

Ford Motor Co. wins an optimism award this week after unveiling its new "nanny chip" embedded car key—a feature that limits teen drivers to 128 km/h, and harangues them through the stereo if they're not wearing seat belts. The device will undoubtedly help ensure the next generation of drivers lives to a car-buying age. We only hope Ford survives to sell them some wheels. The same day the financially troubled automaker rolled out the chip, it saw its credit rating slashed and its stock price fall to the lowest level in 23 years.

Saturday Night Alive

As American institutions go, this one was stale, losing support, lacking relevance. But all that changed this fall with the magic of a woman's touch. We're not talking about the Republican party and veep candidate Sarah Palin—the jury is out on that. But Palin has turned around the fortunes of *Saturday Night Live*, thanks to comedian Tina Fey's note-perfect parody of the "maverick" Alaskan governor. The 33-year-old comedy show is enjoying ratings 49 per cent higher than last year, due in no small measure to Fey's comic turn. It's even rumoured that Palin, hoping to turn the tables, may guest on a future *SNL* show and imitate Fey. Bad idea, Hockey Mom. The line between politics and parody has already been blurred enough.

Bad news

Discouraging words

You can hail the man's honesty, but the words of Britain's top soldier in Afghanistan are nothing to celebrate. Brig. Mark Carleton-Smith's warning that "we're not going to win this war"—along with his recommendation that we commence talks with the Taliban—marks the end of hope that this violent, extremist, intolerant movement could be neutralized as a force in Afghan politics. The objective of the NATO mission, we recall, was to restore hope and coherence to a broken state. If Carleton-Smith is right, the coalition must now negotiate with some of the very men who broke it, validating them as players in the country's politics. No matter who's saying it, that adds up to failure.

Crying wolf

False claims have had devastating impacts on two Canadian communities. In Edson, Alta., a 20-year-old woman said she was accosted on the same path where 14-year-old Emily Stauffer was murdered three days earlier—escalating a community's terror. In Courtenay, B.C., two girls, 13, and 15, claimed a young father touched them inappropriately; he was subsequently beaten to death in an apparent vigilante attack. Police found both allegations groundless, but chose not to lay charges. Their concern is understandable; true victims of violence or sex abuse should never fear their stories will meet with skepticism. Still, these cases were extraordinary, and we think charges were warranted.

FACE OF THE WEEK



HIGHEST HONOUR: Now 107 years old, Frank Buckles is America's last surviving veteran of the First World War

Fatal attraction

Yet another study has confirmed what countless heartbroken wives already know: men cheat. According to an online survey of more than 60,000 American dads, one in three admitted to extramarital affairs, while 54 per cent have considered one. But be careful, gentlemen. A tryst can kill more than your marriage. Researchers in Italy have found that the burden of juggling a spouse and a secret lover can trigger major migraine headaches, and in some cases, fatal aneurysms. Married life, it goes without saying, never causes headaches.

The unedited woman

Margaret Atwood made an early name for herself by observing survival was the dominant theme of Canadian literature. Strange, then, she should support a party that wants to kill the country. Angry over Tory plans to cut arts funding, Atwood said she would vote for the separatist Bloc Quebecois if she lived in Quebec because its leader, Gilles Duceppe, "understands the contribution that culture makes to our economy." Culture is important, yes. But if Atwood really cares for Canada, she'll stop advancing the cause of those who would tear it apart. M

MITCHEL RAPHAEL ON WHICH DEBATERS WE FROSTY TO ELIZABETH MAY, THE MOTHER WHO WON'T VOTE FOR HER MP DAUGHTER, WHY RAHIM CAN'T SEE LENA, AND WHAT OLIVIA WOULD CHANGE AT 24 SUSSEX

AT LEAST THE DEBATERS AGREED ON ONE THING

The tension before the second night of the leaders' debates was "much worse" than on the first night, noted the Green party's **Elizabeth May**. On the first night, party leaders were ushered into the studio two minutes before the French debate went live. That was too close for comfort, so for the English debate the leaders had to wait around the table for 10 minutes, listening to a "pretentious imperial Roman theme song playing over and over that drove us all nuts," recalled May. She quipped to the other leaders, "I guess this is something we can agree on: we all hate this music." Bloc Leader **Gilles Duceppe** was the nicest to May and told her "good job in French" at the end of the first debate. There was "a certain frostiness from **Jack Layton** and **Stephen Harper**," says May. "**Stéphane Dion**, I think, was worried to be too nice because of all the accusations I was there to help him." May bought her green French debate outfit a while ago in Amsterdam and sported it when she met **Queen Beatrix** of the Netherlands and when she became an Officer of the Order of Canada. May joked that since **Shania Twain** was at the same ceremony, "I can't wear it again when I see her." Leaders had to arrive at the National Arts Centre for the debate at a very specific time. "I was glad we were in a Prius because we had to round the block a couple of times to have our appropriate spot in the lineup for getting out at the red carpet," says the Green leader, who flew to Toronto between debates to be on *The Hour* with **George Stroumboulopoulos**. A car was on standby in case of airline trouble.

TORIES AND TOGAS

When Edmonton MP **James Rajotte** introduced **Jason Kenney** at a fundraiser, he called the Calgary MP "a pit bull without lipstick." Kenney and Rajotte have been roommates in Ottawa for some time, but after three years in the works, Kenney's condo should now be finished. Rajotte will be getting a new roomie, Ontario Tory MP **Dean Del Mastro**, who, notes Kenney, "snores more than I do." After Rajotte's fundraiser, the two met up with Edmonton MP **Rahim Jaffer** at the Keg steak house in his riding, where, coincidentally, a toga party was in progress. Jaffer's campaign seems like a lot of fun. His office used to be a huge bingo hall and hair salon—his posters are taped to windows frosted with "Ladies' & Men's Hairstyling" and "Massage." Sadly, Jaffer will not get to see his fiancée, fellow Tory MP **Helena Guergis**, for the entire campaign. They were to marry in the middle of October, but now plan to have the nuptials in January. Jaffer can't leave his riding as he had hoped because he is in a tight race with NDP candidate and well-known environmentalist **Linda Duncan**, who doubled the NDP's vote in the last election and replaced the Liberals for second place. While campaigning in a trailer park, Duncan clashed with a Jaffer canvasser who took verbal shots at her over what would happen to his handgun collection under the NDP.

RONA MISSES HER HORSE SLIVER

Conservative minister **Rona Ambrose** recently attended the annual Harvest Festival at the Pioneer Museum in Stony Plain, Alta. The festival was in the rural part of her riding and the horses brought back memories for Ambrose. "I had to give my horse Sliver away when I was elected in 2004," she says. "He was going crazy because no one was riding him. I love the smell of horses. And once you've been a rider you love the smell of the tack." At the lunch, which included turkey and squash topped with marshmallows, there was talk of the next Liberal leader at one of the tables. Stony Plain Mayor **Ken Lemke** said that while he disagreed with **Bob Rae**'s policies, he thinks Rae has charisma. He impressed the mayor when he went skinny dipping with **Rick Mercer**.



BLOC LEADER Gilles Duceppe (top left); NDP Leader Jack Layton (middle left); Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (top right), MPs Rahim Jaffer, James Rajotte and Jason Kenney at the coincidental toga party (below); (inset) George Stroumboulopoulos

TORY MINISTER Rona Ambrose (top left); Bloc Québécois MP Nicole Demers (middle left), strategist Patrick Muttart (top right), MP Olivia Chow (middle right), (below) Liberal candidate Gerard Kennedy, Libby Davies, (inset) from Rue Morgue House of Horrors

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MITCHEL RAPHAEL

NDP MP DOES HER OWN SIGNS

NDP MP **Libby Davies**'s Vancouver riding includes the Downtown Eastside, where the safe heroin injection health facility InSite is located. Outside its doors Davies is greeted like a patron saint by folks who look like the walking dead. Meanwhile, in other parts of the riding, some folks have no idea who she is. Davies was asked at a few doors if she was **Don Davies**'s wife. Don Davies is a first-time NDP candidate in the neighbouring riding. Libby Davies has been the MP in her riding since 1997, and in a relationship with her partner, **Kim Elliott**, for nine years. Davies says she has been short on volunteers this election because people seem to think her seat is safe and are working on tight NDP/Tory B.C. races. She goes out with no staff and often puts the lawn signs up herself. Well, just the small ones, she says.

BLOCKED ON HER DAUGHTER'S PARTY

Bloc Quebecois MP **Nicole Demers** is one hip grandmother. Her 15-year-old grandson **Alexy Charest** made her ring tone a song by **Sir Pathetik**, a rapper who sings about Quebec independence. Demers's mother, **Jano Demers**, also thinks her daughter is great. After Demers, 58, first won her riding in 2004, the elder Demers put a campaign sign in the window of her Cadillac with a note reading, "This is my daughter." But her mom didn't vote for Demers and has no plans to support the Bloc. "She's 80 years old," says Demers of her non-separatist mother. "She's not going to change her mind." Nevertheless, Demers has been feeling great about this campaign. She quit smoking 2½ months before the election was called and in early October got a breast prosthesis. Demers had a mastectomy eight years ago after being diagnosed with breast cancer. As an MP, she has opposed potentially dangerous breast implants, and refused one herself, but is excited by the new wardrobe choices that the prosthesis will allow.

TINY DOUGHNUTS HISTORY IF JACK LAYTON IS PM

If NDP Leader Jack Layton's dream of replacing Stephen Harper comes true, his wife, Toronto MP **Olivia Chow**, says there'll be some changes at 24 Sussex. When **Laureen Harper** hosted the annual garden parties, the food included hamburgers, Cheezies, and mini-doughnuts fried on the spot with powdered sugar. "Too much trans fat," snaps Chow, who says she will serve healthy fare for kids such as carrots cut into bunny shapes and fruit skewers. These ideas and others have been developed by Chow after consultation with food experts like chef **Anne Yarymowich** at the Art Gallery of Ontario, who has experience making food fun for kids, and celebrity chef **Susur Lee**. Chow has been pushing for a national children's nutrition program. The MP also recently took sartorial shots at the PM at Toronto's all-night Nuit Blanche art festival by stuffing a blue sweater with what she considers nasty Conservative policies. She was playing up her husband's dart at Harper during the leaders' debate, "Where's your platform? Under the sweater?"

BUT WHERE IS JUSTIN TRUDEAU?

Former Liberal leadership contender **Gerard Kennedy** is in a tough Toronto battle with NDP incumbent **Peggy Nash**. The campaign offices are near each other, and right beside Kennedy's is the Rue Morgue House of Horrors, which Kennedy jokes "is the Conservative office. We like everyone close." The folks at the horror house, which shows movies and produces a magazine and radio shows, says neither Nash nor Kennedy has set foot in the place. It used to be a funeral home and a morgue before that. While Kennedy was recently door-knocking, one person, rather strangely, asked him, "Where is **Justin Trudeau**?" This was a good opener for Kennedy, who noted, "Justin supported me when I ran for the leadership." When another man went on about hating Stephane Dion as leader, Kennedy was mum about the fact his support helped Dion to victory.

TORY PIT BULL WOUNDED

PM deputy chief of staff and top strategist **Patrick Muttart**'s male pit bull has been recovering in the Conservative war room after he was attacked by Muttart's female Labrador retriever. The Lab, sadly, had to be put down after the violent attack. M

ON THE WEB: For more Ottawa outtakes or to contact Mitchel Raphael, visit **macleans.ca/mitchelraphael**

There's a reason they sell us electoral Big Macs



ANDREW POTTER

I arrived at work one day last week to find someone had placed a John McCain "Call to Action" figure on my desk. You can have one too—they are widely available online for only US$13.95—but perhaps you'd prefer the Sarah Palin model, a bit pricier at $27.95? Meanwhile, Barack Obama's image is emblazoned on a short dress by designer Jean Charles de Castelbajac, recently on display at Paris Fashion Week.

Here in Canada, it is hoped a sweater vest will change the PM's image from aloof alien to folksy family man, while NDP ads have been fighting back against their leader's "Taliban Jack" label by calling his position "The New Strong."

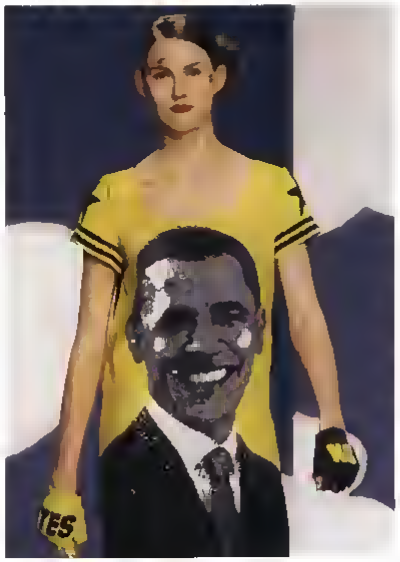
Yes, whatever your partisan leanings this election season, there is a brand for you. Politics seems more and more a branch of marketing, with parties and leaders packaged and sold using the same techniques used to sell energy drinks, NBA players and everything in between.

A lot of people find this highly objectionable. At best (goes the complaint), the consequence of turning politics into marketing is the Big Macification of civil discourse. At worst, it turns us into "Manchurian voters," the manipulation that goes on in political advertising leading to people being basically tricked or bamboozled into voting for a false image that masks a sinister agenda.

This view is widely held. It also happens to be completely wrong. The selling of politics does not undermine democracy, it enhances it, and the branding of political parties and leaders is not a tool for manipulating voters, it is a means of enabling democratic participation.

Consider how brands work. The central question that every consumer faces is, "How do I know I'm not getting ripped off?" How do you know that the bag of flour isn't adulterated, or that these new shoes won't fall apart the minute you get home? Unless you've managed to follow the entire production process from start to finish, you don't. You trust the flour isn't full of bugs because Robin Hood says so. You have faith the sneakers will withstand a running season or two because Nike has put its swoosh on them.

Political brands work the same way. In an election, the question every voter needs an answer to is, "How do I know what I'm buying into with my vote? How do I know I'm not getting snookered?"



MICHEL EULER/CP

Any party that wants to govern should have the lowest common denominator onside

This is where political brands, better known as parties, come in. The role of the party is more or less to take the dense convolutions of modern governance and reduce them to a relatively simple brand proposition. Are you generally in favour of a strong central government that will build national social programs? Then vote Liberal. Would you prefer a more decentralized federation and limited state interference in your life and in the economy? The Conservatives are the party for you.

The paradox of all branding is that the more complicated things get, the simpler the messaging has to be, which is why politics has become so intensely focused on the party leader's character and image. It's pretty remarkable: the next U.S. president will control a budget of somewhere north of $3 trillion, and voters are basically being asked to choose between two brands, Barack Obama's "Change" and John McCain's "Honour."

What of the worry that politics ends up being marketed like Big Macs, pitched to the lowest common denominator? The proper reply is, so what? The emphasis there should be not on the word "lowest," but on the word "common." The government has the job of wielding a monopoly over the use of violence, among other things, and any party that wants to claim the right to do that had darn well better make sure it has the lowest common denominator onside, or it is in big trouble. In a democracy, every politician is in the business of selling electoral Big Macs, and anyone who thinks that's not his job is either a born loser or a tyrant *manqué*.

Most people don't have the time or, frankly, the ability to properly digest policy documents or drafts of new bills, and the distillation of the stupendous complexities of the modern state to a handful of simple but distinct brands is not just useful, but necessary. As in the consumer economy so in modern politics—both would grind to a halt without brands as a lubricant.

Let's give voters a little credit. People are no more bamboozled by a John McCain action figure into voting for John McCain than they are tricked into buying a PC because Jerry Seinfeld is in the ad. That just isn't the way branding or human behaviour works.

Indeed, whether it's Nike's swoosh or Harper's sweater vest, no one ever admits to being a dupe of the marketing—the worry is always that other people are being manipulated. I can see the agenda hidden under Harper's sweater, but other people aren't nearly so perceptive.

But this is a slippery, dangerous slope. When the mere fact that someone supports the other side becomes evidence that they have been brainwashed, then you no longer believe in democracy. M

ON THE WEB For more Andrew Potter visit his blog at **www.macleans.ca/andrewpotter**

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'All of a sudden, I'm a biker's chick, I'm trash. He ran the other way while I drowned.'

JULIE COUILLARD TALKS WITH KENNETH WHYTE ABOUT HER DEAL WITH MAXIME BERNIER, HIS DISLOYALTY, AND HER RESPECT FOR THE PM

Q *I'm going to start at the beginning of your relationship with Mr Bernier, and that very first meeting that you two had*

A: Well, it was actually my real estate broker that invited me to a *cinq-à-sept*. I had mentioned to him a couple of days prior that the Conservative party had approached me to maybe present myself as an MP, which really took me by surprise. But to tell you that I ever took this proposition seriously, no. Still, I was curious about it, and my broker says, we're all going for supper afterwards and, by the way, a minister is going to be there, and maybe you'd like to come and pick his brains, basically, about politics and everything to do with becoming an MP. So I said yeah. He mentioned to me it was the *ministre de l'industrie*—industry minister—Maxime Bernier. As a joke, my broker said, "He's pretty cute, and he's single, so who knows?" That's how we first met.

Q: *In the course of the evening, Mr Bernier got a bit forward with you.*

A: Well, actually, that was at the beginning of the evening. We had just sat down, and he leaned forward and gave me a little peck on the cheek. And some people will say, "How come you got shocked by that? Because next time you saw him you guys ended up being intimate on your first official date." It's not the same as if you meet a guy for the first time, you hit it off well, and then it's officially a date. First of all, my brokers were there. It was a business meeting. I mean, I was in a suit. That's why it was totally out of place.

Q: *You took him outside, gave him a lecture, and said you weren't there as a little helper.*

A: Exactly, yeah.

Q: *What did you mean by little helper?*

A: Well, that was the English translation. I'm not a girl that some company will introduce you to so that, basically, if you find her cute you can have your way with her. Because there were other young girls, all of a sudden, that joined our table, that were not business women. They were there just to party. I wanted to make it clear to Maxime that, you know, you're a very nice guy, we get along great, and you're handsome and all, but I'm calling the shots and nobody else.

Q: *It is kind of offensive for somebody to do that at a first meeting. Why not run from him?*

A: Well, because he was very apologetic.

Q: *So you don't think he mistook you for a little helper?*

A: No, because I can be very blunt. And he was taken aback.

Q: *It wasn't really a business arrangement he proposed when you started to see each other steadily, but it was kind of a professional arrangement, right?*

A: No. Maxime proposed a personal relationship with a condition attached to it. That's how, really, it was presented to me. The first offer was if I wanted to become his girlfriend, and if I would be interested enough to have a serious relationship with him, there were certain strings attached to the fact that he was a politician and a public figure. [They would have to go out for a year.] Though I was a bit shocked in the sense that it's not the most romantic way to ask a girl to go out with you, after his explanation I had to agree with him. He was a politician, he was a public figure, and it came with the territory.

Q: *Right.*

A: I put myself in his shoes. Sometimes you do have to compromise because of your work. And at that point in time, I didn't anticipate not getting along with Maxime.

Q: *In* My Story, *you describe some behaviour on his part that wasn't terribly impressive, his temper tantrums, throwing an iron across the room, and calling you when you're at official functions with important people, summoning you from across the room in a rude way.*

A: While I'm talking with the wife of our ambassador nonetheless, yes.

Q: *And then there's the fact that you found out [that there were] other women.*

A: There's one specific event that I found out while I was his girlfriend, the rest I found out after I was just his friend.

Q: *There's a considerable amount of stuff like this in the book about him, and I have trouble seeing what attracted you two. Did you like him?*

PHOTOGRAPH BY BENOIT AQUIN



*TD Insurance is a trade-mark of The Toronto-Dominion Bank, used under license. All products may not be offered in all provinces.

A: At the beginning I did

Q: *Why?*

A: Well, he's easygoing, he's fun, you'll enjoy a good supper with a good bottle of wine. And we did have a very strong attraction for one another, and you have to understand that we had a long-distance relationship. Four days out of the week Maxime was not there. Every other weekend he had his two daughters. Most probably, if Maxime would have been living where I'm living, after a month or two I would have said, "You know what, buddy? This is not working out." It took me six months because he got promoted and he started travelling a lot, and sometimes I wouldn't even see him for two to three weeks, so when we finally did get together it was like our first date all over again. It wasn't easy for me to realize that he was lacking depth.

Q: *Regarding the men in your life before Maxime Bernier, Gilles Giguere was murdered, and Stéphane Sirois was fairly high up in a motorcycle gang.*

A: No, he was not.

Q: *No? What was he?*

A: While I was with him he was not a biker. He gave back his patch, because that was my condition. I didn't want to go out with a biker. After I divorced him he went back into that world and eventually turned into a rat.

Q: *You've been left heartbroken, broke, and embarrassed by various men in your life. Do you feel you have been unlucky in love?*

A: I've had my unlucky strikes, I have to admit. You have to understand that I was put in a position where I had no choice to write a biography to re-establish the facts and my credibility, and had I written that book at 78, let's say, there would have been a lot more happy times. At this point in time in my life I made a choice of keeping the good business ventures and my happy relationships for me, for the little I had left of my private life.

Q: *So you don't think you have a habit of picking the wrong guy?*

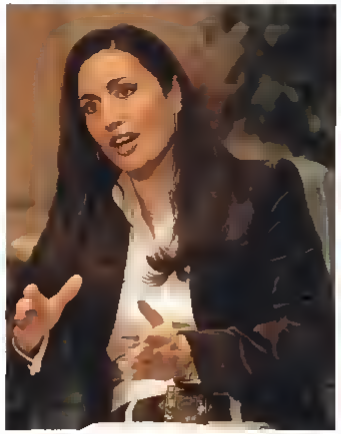
A: Well, I could have a better average.

Q: *I get a bit confused about the end of your relationship with Mr. Bernier. It was in December 2007 that you sort of broke up, but you continued to see one another. You were still more than friends, though.*

A: Yes, we were. I had nobody else in my life, so *j'ai rendu le pratique agreable*, I made what was practical agreeable. I mentioned to Maxime in December that our relationship was not fulfilling me and that I had no time to waste, at my age, and I knew that Maxime was not the guy. And to tell you the truth, Maxime agreed that it was better that we remained good friends, you know? I had given him my word that I would remain his official girlfriend for a year and, to tell you honestly, though you know that that person is not the person of your life, you still can grow very attached. I certainly didn't do it against my own free will or all those things that people implied, that I was paid to be his escort and whatnot. That's totally ridiculous. How many people had an ex that they kept seeing until they met someone else that was more interesting? I think we have all done it. So all of a sudden, because he's a minister, there's this hidden agenda behind it.

Q: *Everybody's trying to impose a story on your life.*

A: It was much simpler than that, and a lot duller than that, if you ask me.





'I had this image of George Bush as this cold person. He had a great sense of humour. That totally threw me off.'

Q: *Well, it's not very dull.*

A: Concerning my relationship with Maxime it was. Yes, fine, I did have a fiance that got assassinated, but that was 12 years ago, and yes, I ended up divorcing a guy that used to be a biker before he went out with me, or got married to me, but that was 10 years ago.

Q: *Is that one of the things that was so horrifying for you about this? Because you've been working, travelling in different circles, and holding your own with ambassadors and important people around the world. And then all of a sudden, you're reading about yourself in the paper.*

A: All of a sudden I'm a biker's chick and I'm this and I'm that and I'm trash and I'm a whore and I'm possibly sent by bikers. What the hell? That's 10 and 12 years ago, so what does that have to do with anything now?

Q: *Was it necessary, in order to re establish your reputation, to go so deeply into Mr. Bernier's character flaws and his misbehaviours?*

A: I think that it was. When you have a team of people who work 45 hours a week to portray you and to sell your image in the media, getting to know the real, true person behind this image can't be easy. It needed to be done so that people would understand not his actions, but his inaction in this circus that crashed my life. Some people will say, "Yeah, well, it's pretty harsh." Well, I'm so sorry but his silence was basically sending a message to the public that he was endorsing everything that was being said. That man knew me, he spent a year with me, six months as his girlfriend, and I was good enough to remain his very good friend for another six months, and he still wanted me to stick around to keep accompanying him in all his official functions, so I couldn't have been such a vulgar woman and a slut and a this and a that and a biker's chick. Yet he let all these things be said about me, and he was the politician, he was the one who had all the tools to stand up and say, "Listen, now, this is not right."

Q: *In March of this year it broke on TV that the minister is dating a biker chick.*

A: May.

Q: *May, sorry, and he went underground.*

A: Exactly, he started acting like he never even knew me. Do you honestly think that the media, politicians, [the general] population would have been the slightest [bit] interested in what Julie Couillard did in her life 10, 11 years ago, 12 years ago? Who gave a damn? Nobody. Everybody became interested. Why? Because I was the official girlfriend of a federal cabinet minister. He ran the other way waving while I was drowning.

Q: *What should he have done?*

A: Well, he should have at least straightened out the facts, and right from the get-go he could have stopped this then and there. He could have said that this is all a cheap way of trying to damage his reputation and damage the party that was in power, and that it had nothing to do with the real issues of our society today and it was just cheap politics. He had all the tools and all the people. He knew that the RCMP, the Sûrete du Québec, la Communaute urbaine de Montréal, all of them, [that] did investigate me back then, came to the conclusion I had nothing to do with organized crime aside from the fact that I was seeing people that knew people in that scene, but on a personal level, and I was not implicated in the criminal activities of any sort. This was just a cheap attempt to damage our government. That's all it was!

Q: *In the book, Stephen Harper comes off better than pretty much anyone else you encountered in that world. You were impressed with him.*

A: Yes, I was. I have to admit that I do not have the same political views as Mr. Harper but I do have a lot of respect for the man.

Q: *George W. Bush impressed you as well.*

A: I had this image of this cold, very restrained person, but he was such a friendly and accessible guy, and very light and funny. He had a great sense of humour. That totally threw me off.

Q: *You say in the book that you thought you let Mr. Bernier off too easily. Is there more to the story that you haven't written?*

A: The only more would be things that I do not think are of any public interest.

Q: *He would, when you were together, complain about Mr. Harper being fat or being controlling. Doesn't everybody complain about the boss?*

A: Maybe. But Maxime doesn't have just a job, he's a politician. That's very different. He shouldn't have a right to disrespect our Prime Minister. And what really pissed me off is that Maxime was a guy that two years before wasn't even in politics and there you go, all of a sudden, because of Mr. Harper, he ends up, hey, the minister of external affairs! Come on! The man might not be perfect, we're all perfectly unperfect, but you should respect him for giving you that opportunity.

Q: *You answered this question already about the men in your life and your batting average. Do you think it's the kind of man you're attracted to or the kind of man who's attracted to you?*

A: Well, I don't know. I know for my part my flaws are more that I see a good-looking guy and he's a good talker and he's a lot of fun and he makes me laugh, and then I have a tendency of more dreaming an image of that person, and then I fall in love with that image, but the guy I'm falling in love with does not even exist. That's what I would have to watch out for. And because, I guess, of my looks some men are attracted to me for the wrong reasons, they stop at what they see instead of seeing deeper than that.

Q: *When you were travelling with Mr. Bernier and going to official functions, you did meet some people and you exchanged business cards on occasion. Did any opportunities or any doors open for you because of that?*

A: I didn't really exchange business cards at all, to tell you the truth, when I was with Maxime. I've had the pleasure of saying, "I've met our ambassador in Paris." But I was the spouse of Maxime, that's why I was there.

Q: *Are you working now?*

A: Oh, no. My life totally stopped. The seventh of May everything stopped.

Q: *What are you going to do now?*

A: That's a very good question. I don't have an answer. I still have a mortgage to pay, and a car payment and so on and so forth. I concentrated on re-establishing the facts and re-establishing my credibility because nobody will have anything to do business-wise with me—which is totally understandable—and I do not believe that the same career is ever going to pick up again.

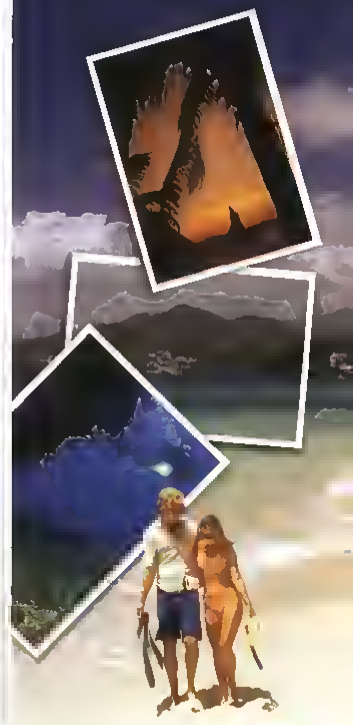
Q: *Real estate?*

A: No, real estate and development. I specialized in a very narrow niche, where you always have to be in contact with the municipalities, with the provincial, even the federal government. M

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BENOIT AQUIN

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A NARCISSISM OF MINOR DIFFERENCES

Stakes in a Canadian election have seldom been this low



ANDREW COYNE

My fellow Canadians,

As election day looms, it is traditional for the political parties to tell you that the choice has never been clearer, the stakes have never been higher.

This election is no different. The country, Stephen Harper says, stands at "a fork in the road," a point on which he is in complete agreement with Stéphane Dion. To hear the leaders speak, it is a choice between the "laissez-faire, I don't-care" approach of the Conservatives, or the "massive" and "reckless" increases in taxes and spending the Liberals would impose—not to mention the "old-fashioned socialism" of the NDP.

We in the media are only too eager to reinforce this all-party message of significance. It would be a surprise if we didn't—we are, after all, in the significance business. We find significance in every passing cloud.

So it is with a heavy heart that I have to tell you that, sometimes, there just isn't that much at stake, that in this election the choice is fuzzy; that whatever the differences between the parties, they do not amount to the kind of stark parting of the ways that all the parties would have you believe.

Let's begin with the economy, the issue that, halfway through the campaign, suddenly vaulted from the most important issue to the *only* issue. I know that many of you are anxious about your RRSPs, worried about the value of your home, perhaps even fearful of losing your job. You should know that none of the party leaders proposes to do any thing about it.

It's not clear there's much they need to do—Harper is right to say that Canada's housing market is not in the same battered shape as America's, nor are our financial institutions as fragile—and it's even less clear there's much they could do. But what's arguable is that they *won't* do much.

Whatever his complaints about Harper's "do-nothing" attitude, Jack Layton is not going to protect your savings from sudden drops in the stock market. Four of the points in Stéphane Dion's "five-point plan," unveiled mid-campaign, are promises to hold meetings, the last is a commitment to spend funds that have already been committed. Nobody's proposing to go into deficit—indeed, they all insist, with increasing implausibility, they will not—which means no fiscal "stimulus," even if you believe that would do any good.

CAMPAIGN 2008

THE PARTIES

The only difference is that Harper makes a virtue of his inaction—sorry, his refusal to panic—whereas the other leaders insist it shows he "doesn't get it," or better yet, "doesn't care," a point of peculiar fascination to the media. The whole issue, then, can be boiled down to that famous London *Sun* headline, addressed to the Queen at the height of the Diana fiasco: "Show us you care, ma'am."

What about those fiscal plans? A couple of numbers should make the point. Total program spending over the next four years, under the Conservatives: $932 billion. Total program spending, under the Liberals: $943 billion. There's a dispute over whether the Liberals could find $12 billion (over four years) in unspecified cuts elsewhere in the budget to set against $30 billion in new spending, but please: we're pretty much talking rounding error. One per cent does not count as "reckless," nor does close to a trillion dollars in spending meet most definitions of "laissez-faire."

It is true that Dion would raise taxes, net his $40 billion in carbon tax revenues is only partly offset by $26 billion in honest-to-goodness tax cuts. The other $14 billion in tax credits should not properly be accounted as tax cuts, but as spending (as I've done above). But the Tories would be in a better position to make that point had they not done exactly the same thing—claimed tax credits as tax cuts. In any case, the extra costs imposed by the Liberal carbon tax are comparable to the extra costs imposed by the Conservative (and NDP) cap-and-trade scheme, though both would nominally apply to business, both would be passed on, in whole or in part, to consumers.

And while all the parties favour "putting a price on carbon," none of them actually follow through on the logic of their position, namely that individuals and businesses can be relied upon to respond to price signals by reducing their emissions. Rather, each party insists on larding up its plan with a vast array of subsidy and regulation schemes of proven ineffectiveness, whose premise is precisely that individuals and businesses *can't* be relied upon to respond to price signals, or not without government leading them by the hand.

There are some interesting differences between the parties. When it comes to paying for child care, for example, the Tories would index the current $100 a month universal child care benefit to inflation, while also providing hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the provinces for child care "spaces." Whereas the Liberals would provide up to $1.25 billion a year to the provinces, without reducing the monthly child care benefit. And whereas the Tories would raise the Age Tax Credit for seniors by $1,000, the Liberals would raise the Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors by $600.

I kid, slightly. The Liberals and the NDP both promise to reduce poverty by roughly a third in the space of a single term, with child poverty to be cut in half. The Tories make no such pledge. The Liberals and the NDP would allocate hundreds of millions of dollars to the provinces to hire more doctors and nurses. The Tories make no specific promise in that regard. The Liberals promise modest cuts in personal and corporate income tax rates, the Conservatives would cut the diesel tax, raise the threshold of eligibility for the small business tax rate, and abolish tariffs on imports of machinery and equipment; the NDP would *raise* corporate taxes, though only to where they were under the last government.

The NDP platform, it should be said, is more overtly interventionist than the others' among a very long list, the party would restrict imports, subsidize exports, cap credit card rates, ban ATM fees, regulate gas prices, set wages, and "review" the whole system of financial regulation. It would set up a "job protection commissioner" to investigate layoffs, "citizen oversight committees" to investigate bank and utility fees, plus "sector-specific strategies" for just about every industry you can name.

But in general one is struck more by the similarities than the differences. All three parties would spend about the same amount on "infrastructure" (*nee* roads and sewers), and all would hand over billions of dollars every year in federal gas tax revenues to the cities to spend as they please. They would all spend more on the arts. All favour subsidies to industry, and would expand the current sheaf of impenetrably named regional development agencies (FEDNOR, FORD-Q, ACOA, etc.) to include those few parts of the country not already papered over with federal cash. None would cut subsidies to farmers, or touch a hair on supply management's expensive, consumer-abusing head.

All promise to pull Canadian troops out of Afghanistan, in one year or three. None, God knows, would so much as talk about abortion.

All favour "respectful" or indeed "open" federalism, the current vogue term for the old "co-operative" federalism, wherein the feds co-operate and the provinces do what ever they like. None would start up any new shared-cost social programs without the provinces' say so, and then only if dissenting provinces could "opt out with compensation." Intriguingly, however, the Conservatives threaten to invoke the federal trade and commerce power if the provinces do not dismantle their trade barriers by 2010. And the Conservatives are the only party to evince an interest in Senate reform. You may decide how likely that is in your lifetime.

But in general, there just aren't the sorts of vast philosophical divides between the parties that there might have been in the past. In large part this is welcome. It's good news that deficit spending is dead, as it is that nobody now proposes to increase the rate of inflation. Even the NDP doesn't want to pull out of NAFTA any more, just "renegotiate."

But this is nothing more than the triumph of the status quo. And in other areas, a more wide-ranging debate is surely in order. Take foreign investment. The Conservatives would slightly loosen the rules in two sectors, airlines and uranium, and then only if other countries do likewise. Is that the best we can do? The Liberals would knock one percentage point off the bottom tax brackets, leaving the top rate where it has been for two decades. Is that the stuff of which Northern Tigers are made?

The Greens, at least, promise proportional representation (along with a $50 carbon tax and tens of billions of new spending), which would open up the political marketplace to parties like, well, the Greens. Must we wait until then for Canadian politics to get interesting? M



ANDREW VAUGHAN/CP TOM HANSON/CP CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS

THE SAME SONGBOOK: All leaders would spend the same on infrastructure and more on arts. None would cut farmer subsidies.



THE REAL HARPER is hard to rattle, but not much given to public displays of empathy

CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS

CAN SLOW AND STEADY WIN THE RACE?

Recessions are hard on governing parties, as the Tories are learning

BY JOHN GEDDES • On the day before Stephen Harper called this election, one of his senior aides framed the campaign around the two questions Conservatives hoped people would have on their minds as they entered the voting booth. The first amounted to a bet that middle-class Canadians would see something of themselves in the incumbent Prime Minister, but not in Liberal Leader Stephane Dion. "Which leader is more like you?" is how the aide put it. And so the country was introduced to the sweater-vested Harper, and soon heard him making family-friendly niche promises like a tax break for kids' music lessons. The second question was harder edged, and its urgency grew as the race unfolded against a backdrop of financial market carnage. "Which leader would you rather have managing the economy in tough economic times?"

The Tories started out sure that Harper would win hands down over Dion if guiding a troubled economy emerged as the top of mind concern. But they got far more than they could possibly have bargained for. Their planned steady-hand-at-the-tiller message began to sound strangely passive as the market turmoil worsened. Greg Lyle, head of the polling firm Innovative Research Group and a one-time strategist for former Ontario Tory premier Mike Harris, said Harper failed to fully exploit voters' clear inclination to see him as the better economic manager. "The Conservatives look good on the economy at first glance," Lyle said. "But then you ask, 'Well, what are they doing?' And that's where they run into trouble, because their general approach is not to have the government mess around a lot. In a crisis, the public likes to see the government doing something."

CAMPAIGN 2008

THE TORIES

So with a week left to campaign, Harper tried to add a bit of activist oomph to his stay-the-course economic theme. He announced $200 million over four years for each of two key federal sectoral subsidy funds, the Strategic Aerospace Initiative and the Automotive Innovation Fund. These fresh promises were aimed directly at Central Canada's manufacturing hubs, and particularly Ontario, which happens also to be home to the last cluster of winnable ridings offering Harper a chance to eke out a majority or, more likely, expand his minority.

Harper used a lunch speech in the heart of Toronto's anxiety-ridden financial district to urge long-term confidence in Canada's economic fundamentals. He tried to persuade a worried business crowd to take a brave look out beyond the storm clouds on the near horizon, predicting Canada "will come out of the current international downturn stronger, better, and more prosperous than ever." But he also took the odd step of reflecting, as his aides had been doing for a few days, on how he had seen economic strife coming all along. He rather awkwardly quoted himself, at length, from another speech he gave in Toronto, six months earlier, when he warned of "global financial volatility."

Boasting about a track record for issuing accurate forecasts is standard salesmanship from brokers and bank economists. But being reminded about what the Prime Minister predicted last winter might be cold comfort for Canadians watching the mutual funds in their RRSPs shrivel this fall. It's easier, though, to pick over weaknesses in Harper's message than to suggest lines that would work better. History shows that a Canadian prime minister who goes to the polls under an economic cloud faces a daunting task. Before this fall's slump, according to Statistics Canada, the country endured six recessions since 1960, the last one ending in 1991 (just before the Tories were all but wiped out in the 1993 elec-



tion). In the federal election that followed each of those recessions, the party in power was either reduced from a majority to a minority, or lost power altogether.

Politics buffs with long memories might argue about how definitive economic concerns were in some of those campaigns. Still, the dismal history of governing parties that had to answer for hard times has to be worrying for Tories. Harper's approach is to downplay the extent of the crisis in Canada, beyond the undeniable drop in the value of equities. In Toronto, he made no mention of the possibility of lost jobs, seeming to suggest the damage might be contained to securities markets. He even alluded to the chance of making some shrewd stock deals. "I think there's probably some great buying opportunities emerging in the stock markets as a consequence of all this panic," Harper told reporters. "Let's put this in perspective. It's a big drop in the stock market. It hits a lot of people. They are going to get their statement, and getting their statement is upsetting. At the same time, stock markets do go up and down, and governments can do very little about stock markets."

That sort of talk probably plays to Harper's strengths, even if it sounded more calculated than comforting. Sweater-vested or not, he was never really going to convince voters that public displays of empathy represent his authentic personality. The real Harper is more present in a refusal to be rattled. It remains to be seen how that plays, though, particularly in southern Ontario, where export-driven manufacturing is heavily exposed to any contraction of U.S. markets, and a large clump of seats remained winnable for the Tories, even as their polling numbers declined from early campaign highs. In fact, as the campaign entered its final days, both the economic news and the campaign's focus were converging on Ontario.

AFTER EVERY RECESSION SINCE 1960, THE INCUMBENT HAS SUFFERED

It wasn't expected to be that way. Earlier in the race, the road to historic Tory gains—maybe enough for a majority—seemed to run straight through francophone Quebec. After winning 10 seats in and around Quebec City in 2006, the Conservatives seemed poised to cut deeply into remaining Bloc Québécois bastions. The Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Polling, or LISPOP, at Ontario's Wilfrid Laurier University, projects how many seats each party would win in each province based on shifting public opinion polls. Early in the campaign, LISPOP projected 22 new Quebec seats for the Tories—only nine short of the 31 they would need nationally, above the 124 MPs they returned in 2006, to secure a House majority. But by last week, dissonance between Tory talk and Quebécois values, on culture cuts and stiffer penalties for teenaged criminals, had hurt Harper to the point that LISPOP was forecasting he would hold roughly the same number he won last time.

In previous eras, being held to a handful of Quebec seats would have doomed a Conservative campaign. The classic Tory majority coalitions of John Diefenbaker and, especially, Brian Mulroney, combined Western dominance with Quebec breakthroughs. But times have changed. Punishing splits on the left of the political spectrum make it far harder for the Liberals—even as Dion hit his stride after an unsteady start to his campaign—to turn an uptick in the polls into a reasonable expectation of more seats. His problem is a solid New Democrat campaign and a small but strategically crucial slice of urban votes bleeding to the upstart Greens, especially after an attention-grabbing performance in the English language TV debate by Green Leader Elizabeth May.

In public remarks, Conservative operatives were stressing Harper's steadfastness on the economy. In private, however, their talk tended to drift more often to those tantalizing left-of-centre vote splits. One veteran Conservative strategist said the key variable, compared to every previous campaign, is the Green vote. Based on surveys conducted the first few days of October, the firm Harris/Decima had the Greens holding at 13 per cent support nationally, a notch higher at 15 per cent in Ontario, fully triple the party's vote total on election day in 2006. Like NDP support, the Green vote bites largely into potential Liberal support. As a result, even if Harper fails to better his 2006 popular vote of 36 per cent, or falls below, he could win considerably more seats. Early this week, LISPOP said publicly available polls had the Tories adding 15 seats in Ontario, even as the party's support drifted down. Some Conservatives said close three-way, or even four way races, in and around Vancouver might deliver Harper a few more hard-fought seats.

The key battleground is Ontario, the big question is how to react to economic upheaval, and the main strategic variable is a new sort of vote splitting on the left. If there's a strong possibility that a familiar result will be cooked up on Oct. 14—another Tory minority—it won't be for lack of some new and interesting ingredients being thrown into the mix. M



PHOTOGRAPH BY YVONNE BERG

SLAP FIGHT! LIFE IN A SWING RIDING.

Garth Turner vs. Lisa Raitt could determine our next government

BY AARON WHERRY • In a United Church in a suburban subdivision halfway between Hamilton and Toronto, the reverend appeals for a little restraint. The man from the Oakville Chamber of Commerce agrees. "These events can sometimes become emotional," he says of this debate he's moderating. "I'd like to remind everyone that you're in the sanctuary of a church. Out of respect for the church, for the chamber, our community and the candidates, please remember to act in an appropriate and acceptable manner."

The peace lasts approximately three minutes.

"In my closing statement tonight, I'll give you a few reasons why people might want to vote for me," Garth Turner, the Liberal candidate, says in his opener. "Right now, I'd like to give you a few reasons not to vote for the Conservative candidate." He proceeds with a review of various alleged failings on the part of his Conservative rival and a series of rhetorical queries. "Question: do you want an MP with a track record of being reckless with your money? Question: do you want an MP that divides people and shuns democracy? Question: do you want

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HOLDING the candidates' debate in a church did nothing to dissuade the snide attacks from both sides

CAMPAIGN 2008

SWING VOTES

an MP that thinks we won't notice?"

The Conservative candidate, Lisa Raitt, sitting directly to his right, takes the opportunity to put herself above such stuff. "Wow," she says. "I want to thank Mr. Turner for that trip down memory lane. Of course, with a slanted attack involved in it. But you know what I'm going to do tonight, guys? I'm going to talk about what I think is important and that's the issues here in Halton."

The next hour is a periodically entertaining slap fight. A periodically entertaining slap fight that could more or less determine who the prime minister is on Oct. 14.

In electoral parlance, Halton is a swing riding, one of maybe two dozen in Ontario where a winner isn't obvious and the difference between, say, a Conservative majority and a Liberal minority may well be decided. The two ruling parties have traded Halton for more than a century. Including parts of Burlington, Milton and Oakville, this is a booming stretch of suburbia famil iar with both affluence and job losses (Ford's Oakville plant is nearby). In 2006, it went Conservative, by 1,900 votes. Then Halton's MP, the aforementioned Mr. Turner, went Liberal, due to irreconcilable differences with Harper's caucus. Harper then appointed Raitt, CEO of the Toronto Port Authority, a coal miner's daughter with three degrees and two kids, to run against him.

Beneath a large wooden cross, the congregation—maybe a hundred people seated in the pews—seems evenly split. The Tory is bright, well-spoken and passive-aggressive—all nods and shrugs and patronizing smiles. The Liberal, in black beard and dark suit, is blustery and dramatic, an evangelist of sorts. (Green and NDP nominees are present too, but might as well have emailed in their talking points given their electoral chances.)

"We need members of Parliament who have the courage and the backbone to stand up and say, 'My constituents deserve to have an independent voice,'" Turner pleads.

"The last thing we need is another trained seal on that bench."

"While I agree with Mr. Turner wholeheartedly that one has to have the courage and the backbone to stand up, one must also have the facts," Raitt retorts, counting up all the new schools, police stations and hospital beds the area will need by 2031. "That is a laundry list that needs to be delivered on results. Not just courage, but a plan, action, a seat at the government."

Debate moves from the economy to Afghanistan to health care, but much of the repartee is linked implicitly or explicitly to Turner's melodramatic change of party. A natural self-promoter, Turner has blogged himself into a cause since then. And in Raitt, he seems to have found a stand-in for all he despises in Harper's government. "We give people hope, we don't just frighten them," he declares at one point. "We don't send out mailers," he adds, holding aloft a pair of incendiary flyers distributed by the governing side.

Raitt grimaces and mouths "no props" to the moderator. "We would request that no props be used," the moderator says.

"It's good that some of us abide by the rules," Raitt scolds.

"Do you want to take them back?" Turner asks.

"No actually, I think you could learn something from them, Mr. Turner," Raitt snipes.

There's a question about developing the Arctic. "With all due respect," Raitt says, "I don't think Mr. Turner knows what he's talking about when he talks to Arctic sovereignty." Furthermore, she suggests the Liberals are intent on "gutting" military spending.

Turner fumes. "As somebody who actually has a family member over there, who's being shot at right now, I completely take offence at that," he says, referring to a niece stationed in Afghanistan. "That is not what anybody, any party, in this country is proposing right now—we will support our troops. And in this election I really hope we can focus on truthful answers."

Speaking of which, Raitt offers a clarification. "I do want to be able to address the issue of whether or not my nose should be growing as a result of statements that I've made on the child care tax credit. And I can assure you that it doesn't grow."

Turner, with a press release in hand, rebukes her. "The Conservative candidate here has said clearly that the child care benefit would be cancelled [by the Liberals]. It won't be," he says. "No political party is going to cancel that. Anyone who says that is playing the politics of fear and shame on them."

This is the wider fight in sample size—all the awfulness and splendour (and props) of a national campaign squeezed into a modest church and moderated by a guy from the chamber of commerce.

"So we had a spirited discussion tonight," Raitt says by way of conclusion. "What I can commit to you is this, that I will be your representative. I have passion, I have commitment, I have roots and I have a very great self-interest in Halton since my two children are growing up here. My name's Lisa Raitt. And I'd like to give the hard working families of Halton something they deserve, a Conservative member of Parliament they can be proud of."

The former Conservative finishes with a crescendo. "In Halton the choice is clear, it's simple," Turner says. "Choose the Stephen Harper spokeswoman. Or choose a guy who put his voters first, who paid the price and promises one thing: more of the same."

There is extended applause here, but it is hardly a decisive moment. The night is a draw, the split only better defined. M

PHOTOGRAPH BY YVONNE BERG

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LEARNING THE ART OF POLITICS

Dion held his own in the debates. Can he keep the momentum?



PAUL WELLS

Stéphane Dion still loves to talk. Clearing 20 minutes for an interview at the front of his campaign plane on Monday was a cinch. The Liberal leader had ready answers for every question and apologized profusely when time ran out. "If you have more questions, just ask. Don't hesitate."

The moment was propitious, because Dion's young and inexperienced staff was starting to realize that he might soon get a chance to run more than his mouth. After two years of getting sand kicked in his eyes, Dion had performed well in the leaders' debates and then started to make some gains in the polls. Or more precisely, Stephen Harper was posting losses. After being cast as fortune's fool for so long, could Dion finally capitalize on an opportunity?

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. First that interview.

I asked about his 30-day, five-part "plan" for the economy—meet the premiers, meet the heads of regulatory agencies, meet private-sector economists, release a fiscal update, speed up some infrastructure spending. That's a lot of meetings, and some ribbon cuttings. What would it change, concretely? What would it make possible that a sitting prime minister wouldn't already have done?

"Not acting is not an option," Dion said. "There's only one head of government claiming he mustn't act, it's Stephen Harper. The Europeans act, the Americans act, Harper criticizes them and does nothing.

"We're going to turn over every stone and see whether, in our regulations, there's something we can do to better protect savings and mortgages, pensions and jobs. We'll accelerate investments in infrastructure and manufacturing to create economic activity. We'll have an economic and fiscal update very quickly, to put everything in place so we can protect ourselves as well as possible. And we'll bring the provinces and territories in to coordinate our action."

But surely a Canadian government can't do much against a global banking crisis? Dion wouldn't have many levers to work with.

"The government does have a role to play, but you have to believe in the role of government," he said. "Why have conservative governments generally been poor economic managers? Fundamentally it's because they don't believe in the role of the government to help the population. So they show up with an ideology of deregulation, which exposes us to the worst excesses. We see this in the economy, in food safety. It's always the same. Always the same."

Then the segue. Harper isn't Dion's only problem. Jack Layton is bidding, harder than ever before, to make the NDP competitive with the Liberals for Opposition status or—why not dream?—power.

"Mr. Layton doesn't understand the market economy," Dion said. "In the debates he said his first step would be to cancel $50 billion in corporate tax cuts. The capital market is expecting those cuts. If we cancel them, the stock market will be harder to control than ever."

CAMPAIGN 2008

THE LIBERALS

Harper began the campaign by mentioning at every stop that he's an economist. I put the obvious implication to Dion: that in hard times, the leader who's needed is the only economist in the race.

I will perhaps not shock you when I report that Dion was unimpressed. "First, his team is very weak. He has a minister of finance who told the investors of the world not to invest in Ontario. He should have shown him the door right away. If he didn't, it's because he has no other finance minister at hand. He says he's an economist, but he's taken steps that defy all economic logic. There is no economist who will say he's made good decisions on tax matters. He hasn't been managing as an economist, he's been managing as a politician looking for votes and worried about the next poll.

"He's spent more than any other politician, but he has built nothing. Productivity has declined in Canada for nine months. What has he done to improve productivity? To strengthen universities, researchers, private-sector research? He's governed to please, not to build."

RYAN REMIORZ/CP

'WHAT HAS HARPER DONE? HE'S GOVERNED TO PLEASE, NOT TO BUILD.'

I asked Dion about the news from Afghanistan. A senior British commander, Brig. Mark Carleton-Smith, says that war isn't winnable—that no definitive military victory is possible and that it's time to talk to the Taliban. What does Dion think?

"It's for the Karzai government to determine how to make a hostile force more peaceful. We're there to offer more security and more justice. I never said it wouldn't be difficult. I'm sure it is. We're not facing an enemy army in uniform, with a white flag ready to go up if it goes badly for them. We're fighting terrorism. Terrorism is always difficult to fight, and it's not victory it's looking for, it's victims.

"So if this general is taken aback by what he sees on the ground, I'm not astonished. But we Canadians have signed on until 2011 to do everything we can to provide security, to train their soldiers and police, their judges, to build more schools and hospitals."

But Stephen Harper surprised a lot of people in this campaign by calling not just for Canadian troops to pull out of Kandahar in 2011, but for our NATO allies to hand the whole defence mission over to the Afghans. When we talked, Dion was still having trouble getting his head around the way Harper's tune has changed on Afghanistan.

"If that's what he said it's lamentable, because the same man was saying precisely the opposite a few months ago. That we should stay as long as the job isn't done, whatever that means. So if somebody could change his mind like that, according to short-term interest, and say something completely different from what he's been saying, then he can change back too. Once in government he could say, 'Something's come up, we have to stay.' You can't believe a man like that."

Columnists get twitchy if we talk about policy for too long, so I changed the subject to strategy. Dion had bet just about his entire career on four hours: the French- and English-language leaders' debates. For two years he was confident that everything would change once voters got a chance to hear him and the other leaders. Now does he think the bet was wise?

"The debates were a big moment. Why? Because for once Canadians saw in their living room, not the caricature Mr. Harper constructed, and not the media filter. So it was an important occasion for me. We'll see whether it makes a difference."

In Dion's entourage, some of his staffers have lately dared to hope that their man is (belatedly!) learning some of the elements of the politician's craft. I put it to the man himself: is Stéphane Dion becoming more political?

"Every day, I'm sure, I'm like good wine. I get better. I think I'm better known. I'm not the caricature people have made of me."

In the home stretch, with the Conservatives faltering in the polls but Dion having trouble establishing himself as the sole alternative, a question arises. What if the NDP and Liberals, between them, elect more MPs than the Conservatives? Would Dion consider a coalition with the NDP? If Harper is as bad as he keeps saying, would he have a right not to consider a coalition?

Dion didn't exactly hold out an olive branch. "We're in this to win. And Mr. Layton made the mistake of presenting a program that's not realistic. He could have come up with a Third Way program like Tony Blair. It would have been harder for me. But he has an old-style socialist program. I'm saying to voters who supported the NDP, we share the same progressive values."

But then he would say that, before the fact, because his interest is in herding skittish New Democrats to his Liberal banner. Straight talk at this stage about what might come after the election would undermine that play. The same considerations, no doubt, affect Dion's answer to my next question. Lots of prime ministers needed two tries to become prime minister, I said. Stephen Harper and Lester Pearson both lost their first campaign as Opposition leader. Both hung on to win a second election. Would Dion want to do the same? Would his party let him?

Dion only smiled. "I'll win the first time." M



THE TORIES' QUEBEC PROBLEM

Harper's edge here is vanishing, and arts cuts are just the start

BY MARTIN PATRIQUIN • Café Zénob is a basement-level bar off the main strip in Trois-Rivières, a city of 140,000 that's an hour and a half (and, locals like to think, a million miles) from Montreal. Every October for 23 years it has hosted le Festival international de la poesie, for the price of a pint visitors can hear poets from five continents read their work. Tina Charlevois read there recently, as did Luis Alberto Arellano. After each reading, host Gilles Devault utters a mandatory benediction of sponsors, mostly a gaggle of government agencies. "I'd like to thank Heritage Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ministry of Tourism and Quebecor. I've probably forgotten some, but it's not like they're here," he said, eliciting a rarity: boisterous laughter from poets and their fans.

Trois-Rivières' poetry festival is a clear rebuke to the assumption, popular outside the province, that culture is strictly the domain of a plush, arty Montreal-based clique. Its popularity—it marks one of two times a year where all hotels in the city are booked solid—suggests the Conservative government wildly misjudged the Quebec electorate when it cut some $45 million in cultural grants.

Ostensibly part of the Conservatives' plan to attract the vote outside of Montreal, the cutting of cultural grants has instead become the opposition's weapon of choice to pillory Harper's candidates in the very districts he needs in order to win a majority. Many of these candidates, including Trois-Rivières' Claude Durand, have ducked public debates where the cuts have become *l'ordre du jour*.

As brash as they seem, though, the cultural cuts aren't without precedent in terms of angering Quebecers. The Harper government trimmed between $20 million and $30 million from the province's economic development grants in June, prompting howls from critics and alienating Quebec Premier Jean Charest.

The economic development grants are a mainstay of Quebec's research and development sector. Federal grants have funded the maritime research centre in Rimouski and Université de Laval's optical research centre, both world leaders in their fields. "It's a complete absence of vision," says Régis Labeaume, Quebec City mayor and one of the fiercest critics of the cuts. "It's free advertising for Canada, and that's what's aggravating to me. It's the stupidity of the thing. It's been very damaging for Harper in the region."

CAMPAIGN 2008 QUEBEC

Labeaume might be considered a natural ally for Harper. Elected just under a year ago, he is business-minded, frank and unburdened by allegiances to any sovereignist party. He also rules over fertile territory: the clutch of seats that served as a Conservative beachhead since 2006, and which Harper himself has targeted. There is an entrepreneurial streak running through this region, as well as a history of voting Conservative (often, Stéphane Dion's Liberals haven't even bothered with campaign signs). Yet Labeaume says he can't even get Harper on the phone. "The mayors of the 10 biggest cities in Canada should have the PM's ear, but I don't have it. I have Jean Charest's ear, but not Stephen Harper's."

"The Conservatives have taken the Quebec City region for granted," says Dominic Maurais, host of the city's top-rated morning show. Maurais is another would-be Conservative who in two weeks has grown disillusioned with the Conservative platform—or lack thereof. "There is no economic development plan for the regions outside of Montreal. The economy is going so well. Yet we have no leadership here to deal with the labour shortage, or on how to get more immigrants to the area. And we speak bloody bad English, which hurts us globally."



PROBLEM No. 2: Charest was expected to throw his support behind Harper. Not quite.

Jean Charest, meanwhile, has proven to be another headache for the Conservative campaign. Rather than tacitly supporting the party, as most of the province's punditocracy predicted, he has instead repeatedly attacked the Harper government on both the cultural and economic development fronts. The Quebec premier presented a list of 14 demands, including control over cultural spending in the province—all of which were immediately endorsed by the Bloc's Gilles Duceppe. It is a measure of Harper's woes in the province when a sovereignist leader endorses the ideas of the Conservatives' closest provincial ally.

Barely a month ago, polls and pundits alike said the province was Harper's to lose. Now, it seems less and less likely the road to a Conservative majority runs through Quebec. M

FOR THE RECORD

DANNY WILLIAMS AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE

"People are completely disgusted with how the premier has gotten on and more so his cabinet ministers and caucus—they're like a little bunch of elves running around following directions. It's just crazy."—Retiring federal Fisheries Minister Loyola Hearn on Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams' provincial cabinet mobilization for his "Anybody But Conservatives" activism in the federal election

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MAKING THE NEWS

What will tomorrow's polls say? Depends on today's coverage.

BY KATE LUNAU • In last week's election debate, NDP Leader Jack Layton got off the best (or most obnoxious) zinger of the night: "Where's your platform?" he demanded of Conservative Leader Stephen Harper. "Under the sweater?" Like it or not, the point was well-made: in week four of the federal election campaign, the Tories had yet to release one major policy announcements were also lacking, as Harper struggled to reassure Canadians the economy was fundamentally sound. In the debate, as in the campaign, the Tory leader played it safe: his favoured tactic seemed to be "buckle down and smile" as opposition leaders piled on, says Stuart Soroka, co-director of the Media Observatory at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada.

CAMPAIGN 2008

THE MEDIA

But if Harper plans to make any real gains in the Oct. 14 vote, this defensive strategy may not serve him well. According to the 2008 Federal Election Newspaper Analysis Project, a weekly election feature in *Maclean's*, the PM failed to attract much more media attention in the fourth week of campaigning than he did in the first. This suggests he's failed to build momentum: in his campaign, shifts in election coverage can predict shifts in public opinion by several days, Soroka notes.

After the debate, "nobody was talking about Harper winning," Soroka says. Whether or not debate performance matters, as we entered the final week before the election, a Tory majority was looking more elusive than ever.

Soroka's team conducts an automated analysis of election coverage in seven newspapers: the *National Post*, *Globe and Mail*, Montreal *Gazette*, *Toronto Star*, *Calgary Herald*, *Ottawa Citizen* and *Vancouver Sun*. So far, "it's been a remarkably flat campaign," Soroka says. His data shows that, in week four, 41 per cent of all articles mentioned Harper first, compare that to week one, when 40 per cent did.

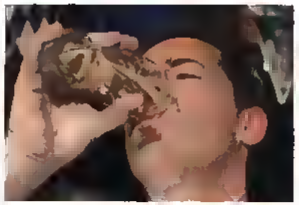
When it comes to getting headlines, though, the Liberal leader has done even worse. Last week, 12 per cent of articles mentioned Stéphane Dion first, slightly *less* than in week one, when 16 per cent did. (Their parties are closer: 34 per cent of articles mentioned the Conservatives first last week, while 21 per cent mentioned the Liberals.)

Dion's tepid campaign did get a boost from the debates. On Oct. 1 (the day of the French-language debate), 42 per cent of articles mentioned Harper first, while just nine per cent mentioned Dion. By Oct. 3 (the day after the English debate), Dion had 17 per cent of first mentions. That didn't last—on Oct. 4, the Liberal leader's coverage plummeted to eight per cent, while Harper was at 44 per cent.

Immediately after the debates, Dion got better reviews in the dailies: his net tone (a score found by subtracting negative from positive newspaper mentions) jumped from -1.4 to 0.5 from Oct. 1 to 3, while Harper's score saw a less dramatic increase from -0.7 to 0.1. Entering the final week of the campaign, Harper and Dion had the overall same net tone of -0.1.

In both 2004 and 2006, Harper's campaign momentum stalled. Soroka's data suggests it's happening again. "There comes a time where holding steady isn't enough," he says. "At some point, somebody has to say something good about you—not just that you've survived so far." M

Hard times? We need a beer subsidy.



RYAN REMIORZ/CP JONATHAN HAYWARD/CP

PREMIER McGuinty puts taxpayer money where his mouth is

BY PETER SHAWN TAYLOR • With tough times ahead, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said last week his fall economic statement will reflect "the need for us to be prudent ... given what is happening to our revenues." Some might disagree with his definition of prudent. Days earlier, his government announced an $8-million subsidy program—for beer.

The province's Ontario Craft Brewers Opportunity Fund will, for the next four years, give small brewers six cents per litre for all the beer they sell. The money is to be spent on marketing, allowing them to compete with the ad budgets of large, internationally owned beer companies.

John Hay, president of the Ontario Craft Brewers Association, calls the new subsidy "a wonderful program. Our industry is really gathering strength and creating jobs. And we make excellent beer." No one has disputed the tastiness of their product, but the job creation figures seem rather small beer. Hay points to nearly 500 jobs at dozens of small breweries as evidence of the industry's economic impact. And he predicts a doubling to 1,000 jobs by 2014. Yet in 2005, when the organization received a different $5 million subsidy from the province, Hay claimed his industry had "current employment of 600 jobs," and he predicted employment of 1,600 by 2014. So the subsidies keep coming, but the job numbers seem to be shrinking.

If small brewers need help convincing Canadians to drink beer, they seem to have no problem reaching provincial politicians. Over the summer, Hay's group hosted a well-attended beer-tasting contest for MPPs. And when Speaker of the House Steve Peters chose Neustadt Scottish Pale Ale as his official beer of the legislature, the brewery was so pleased it commissioned an oil painting of him, complete with beer-can gavel and thumbs up sign. Cheers! M



OBSESSED? YOU B!TCHA.

Why so many women, and some men, too, are so enraged by Sarah Palin

BY LUIZA CH. SAVAGE

In the days after John McCain unveiled Sarah Palin as his running mate, David Plotz started having dreams about the Alaska governor. Plotz, who edits the online magazine *Slate*, said the dreams were "non specific" but negative. "She appeared as a threatening ominous figure," Plotz said in an interview, adding, "I don't usually dream very much." His colleagues were dreaming about Palin too. "I thought, this is *odd*. I don't think anyone is dreaming about Joe Biden." So Plotz asked his readers if the same thing was happening to them. He got roughly 700 responses—of which 200, he says, chastised him for writing about something so frivolous. But the rest were eager to share. Conservative men dreamed they were marrying the pistol-packing hockey mom or performing acts that Plotz deemed "unrepeatable." Some women dreamed she was their pal. "And there was a huge set in which Palin killed animals, or ordered the dreamer to kill animals. In one, she shot all the animals in the zoo. In one, the dreamer was an animal killed by Sarah Palin," says Plotz. There were several in which Palin "appears as a genial, sympathetic figure and morphs into a scary person murdering animals." In others, she "emasculated" McCain, who appeared as a shadowy figure fading into the background.

It didn't take a dream interpreter to see that Palin had burst forth from the backwoods of American politics with her rifle armed right at the fragile psyche of Democrats. Those doomed animals? For a while it seemed they were Democratic electoral hopes. Before Palin was unveiled, Barack Obama was leading by three to four points in the polls. In the week after her convention debut, most polls showed either a tie or a lead for McCain. "It looked like everything Democrats had hoped for was going to go for naught," says Plotz. "There was a panic about her that manifested itself in the subconscious."

How bad did it get? Jon Wiener, a history professor at the University of California at Irving, with a Ph.D. from Harvard, confessed in a Sept. 11 posting on the liberal blog Huffington Post that he had developed an "obsession" and an "addiction" to Palin. "I read everything I can about her. I watch TV, hoping Wolf Blitzer will say something about her. I get irritable waiting for the next Maureen Dowd column about her. I've come to understand that this is not a bad habit, or a moral failing—it's a disease." Marty Kaplan, a speech writer for former vice-president Walter Mondale, wrote: "My therapist told me that I'd be astonished if I knew how many emergency calls she got the night that Sarah Palin gave her convention speech."

And that was just the men. "All of my women friends, a week ago Monday, were on the verge of throwing themselves out windows," an author and anti-war activist, Nancy Kricorian of Manhattan, told the *New York Sun* a week after the convention. "People were flipping out. Every woman I know was in high hysteria over this. Everyone was just beside themselves with terror that this woman could be our president—our potential next president." Blog commentators declared themselves scared, disgusted and enraged. "I am angry. I am infuriated," wrote the popular mommy blogger Heather Armstrong on her blog *dooce.com*, where she rarely talks politics. One female attorney wrote to an advice columnist at the online magazine *Salon* that her work was suffering because she spent all her time looking online for more damning information about the governor.

There was a double bitterness for those who had supported Hillary Rodham Clinton, a woman who built her own political campaign, mapped out her own positions on the issues, dominated the primary debates, and raised her own funds. Palin, sweeping onto a ticket while praising Clinton's "grace" and the cracks that she put in the glass ceiling, declared "the women of America are not finished yet"—like the perky cheerleader beating the frumpy valedictorian in the school election. Anti-Palin women's groups were formed on the Internet, including Facebook. Kim Gandy, president of the National Organization of Women, played it cool, limiting her Palin comments to, "Her policies are wrong for women." But for Palin's angry foes, it was more than a disagreement with her policies, which, after all, were John McCain's. The repulsion was downright visceral.

Republicans came up with a name for it. Palin derangement syndrome—a cousin of Bush derangement syndrome, which the columnist Charles Krauthammer coined in 2003 to mean the irrational paranoia about anything having to do with the sitting President. "What all the attackers have in common is an almost pathological hatred and attendant desire to project upon Palin all of their worst fears, prejudices, and in some cases, fantasies," wrote conservative commentator Cinnamon Stillwell in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. She noted that in *Salon* magazine, writer Gary Kamiya likened Palin to a "dominatrix," while University of Michigan Middle East studies professor Juan Cole compared her to a "Muslim fundamentalist" and a member of the Taliban.

Then came the trickle of halting and at times incoherent television interviews, and Democratic anger gave way to relief, and some bipartisan embarrassment. In the *National Review*, one conservative writer, Kathleen Parker, called on Palin to step aside before she did more damage. "Palin's recent interviews with Charles Gibson, Sean Hannity, and now Katie Couric have all revealed an attractive, earnest, confident candidate. Who Is Clearly Out Of Her League. No one hates saying that more than I do," Parker wrote. "Like so many women, I've been pulling for Palin, wishing her the best, hoping she will perform brilliantly. I've also noticed that I watch her interviews with the held breath of an anxious parent, my finger poised over the mute but ton in case it gets too painful. Unfortunately, it often does. My cringe reflex is exhausted."

On the eve of her vice presidential debate on Oct. 2, the McCain-Palin ticket was polling at nine points below the Obama-Biden ticket. The expectations going into the debate could not have been lower. But Palin proved that, like George W. Bush, she thrives on being "misunderestimated." She may have once been a hockey mom, but she is more like a figure skater: getting up after pratfalling in the most spectacular fashion, continuing on with the routine, and smiling, always smiling—even when delivering lines in the debate like, "We will never allow a second Holocaust."

She smiled through her "darn rights" and "doggone its" and "you betchas!" She made no major mistakes, and spoke through the camera to the "hockey moms and Joe Six Packs" at home. But where supporters saw a quick study, critics saw a puppet straining to



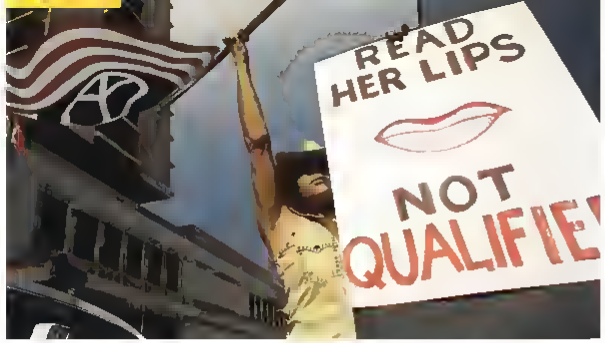
CHRIS CARLSON/AP; ROBYN BECK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; DELBRIDGE LANGDON JR./AP; JOE RUBANK/AP

SHE IS LIKE a figure skater who gets up after a spectacular fall, continues with the routine, and keeps smiling—always smiling—even when delivering lines about the Holocaust









SHE SETS UP A TENSION BETWEEN GUT AND REASON, AND CHALLENGES VOTERS TO TAKE SIDES





PALIN HAS PROVED that she can push the emotional buttons of her political foes more deeply than any politician in recent history—except perhaps for Hillary Rodham Clinton

repeat hastily crammed talking points Parker, who had called for Palin to step aside for the good of the Republican ticket, conceded that in the debate, Palin had improved. "She did her homework, studied hard, and delivered with spunk," she wrote. But, she added, "Still, I had the uneasy feeling throughout that I was witnessing a data dump from a very appealing droid."

After the debate, a CBS poll showed that both Biden and Palin raised their favourability rankings to 40 per cent. But a lot of people weren't buying it. Thirty-two per cent of viewers had an "unfavourable" impression of Palin after the debate, while only 19 per cent were unfavourably disposed to Biden. Likewise, 75 per cent considered Biden to be ready to be president, and only 42 per cent considered Palin ready.

With her debate performance, Palin again proved that she can push the emotional buttons of her political foes more forcefully, and get under their skin more deeply, than any other politician in recent memory. At least, not since Hillary Rodham Clinton did it to the other side. Why the visceral reaction to the Alaska governor? We might start with the winks. Palin-lovers adored them during the VP debate. "I'm sure I'm not the only male in America who, when Palin dropped her first wink, sat up a little straighter on the couch and said, 'Hey, I think she just winked at me,'" wrote Rich Lowry in the *National Review*. "And her smile. By the end, when she clearly knew she was doing well, it was so sparkling it was almost mesmerizing. It sent little starbursts through the screen and ricocheting around the living rooms of America. This is a quality that can't be learned, it's either something you have or you don't, and man, she's got it."

Critics saw something more sinister. Blogger Andrew Sullivan, whose page on *The Atlantic* magazine website has become something of a clearing house for Palin criticism, posted a 1932 cartoon entitled *Betty Boop for President* and commented on its "unnerving prescience." In it, the cartoon Betty, barely contained in a bustier and garter, does a lot of winking in her cartoon campaign speech. "What this country is in need of is a lot of 'heidy-ho!'" she chirps. "When I'm the president, I'll give you all a great big kiss, when I'm the president." Wink. Wink. She wins the election.

Critics said that if Clinton had started winking and flirting from the podium, she would have been laughed off the stage. "Hillary Clinton was the ultimate serious candidate. She was seen as mannish in some respects by the electorate," observes Cynthia Harrison, an associate professor of history and women's studies at George Washington University. "Palin is quite the opposite. She's winking and going out of her way to use colloquialisms. She's playing up her femininity. Her free wheeling coquettish appeal—some people say it's so refreshing, such a breath of fresh air. But people who don't agree with her say she's not taking it seriously enough, that her mannerisms are troubling [for someone] on the world stage. I've heard people say that if she ever got to be president they would be so embarrassed that we'd be represented by this woman."

Kate Richmond, editor of the newsletter *The Feminist Psychologist* and a professor of psychology at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., said there was a lot of anger in her social circle about the Palin pick and her debate performance, largely because of her policies, but also because of the example she was setting for other women—that sexy and maternal wins. "Social-psychological research shows that the women who get ahead tend to be seen as the iconic bitch or liked in a sexual way," Richmond says. "One way is to play like a man—know the issues, be smart, be ahead of the game, like Hillary Clinton. The other is to be liked, to be attractive. Sarah Palin is reaching out to white male voters and doing it in a folksy, flirty, attractive way." There is something threatening about watching flirty succeed where sober couldn't. "It's scary. It does suggest that if it can happen at the presidential level then it could happen in any woman's work or home life," Richmond says.

And Palin's ambition unnerves Democrats the way Clinton's once did Republicans. Palin herself has reminded the Republican base that she could be president. In her convention speech, she compared herself to president Harry Truman, ostensibly because he was a former haberdasher who also came from a small town. What she left unsaid, but implied, was that Truman became president when Franklin D. Roosevelt died less than three months into his fourth term.

But if Palin's style is the opposite of Clinton's, it does have a lot in common with George W. Bush's—and not just in her unblinking confidence, mangled syntax and expressions of evangelical faith. It's contempt for what Palin calls the "elites"—not wealthy financiers, but people who write and think

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for a living. Still, there is a difference. Bush used his adopted Texan twang and frat boy mannerisms to distance himself from his true biography as the Ivy League-educated scion of a wealthy East Coast political dynasty. Palin was born to a school secretary and a science teacher and attended six colleges in five years before finally earning her degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Idaho. In some ways, Palin really is the character Bush was just playing.

The Palin Effect, if it could be called that, is not about coming from a small town or enjoying the shooting of moose. It's that she sets up a tension between gut and reason, faith and knowledge, street smarts and book smarts, and challenges people to take sides. "I may not answer the questions the way that either the moderator or you want to hear," she boasted in the VP debate. Indeed, appearing too professorial, condescending or pointy headed is a liability in politics—just ask Al Gore. Even former professor and author Barack Obama likes to drop his G's at rallies. But Palin's anti-intellectualism has scaled new heights. "The founders of the American republic were hoping that Americans would agree to be governed not by an inherited aristocracy but an aristocracy of merit. If you told James Madison [about Palin], I think it would bring the man to tears, frankly," says Harrison.

It could be the reason why the conservatives who've written most critically about Palin—the ones whom McCain has derided as the "Georgetown cocktail party person who, quote, calls himself a conservative who doesn't like Sarah"—also have been among the most cerebral. Syndicated columnist George Will has called her "a person of negligible experience." Former Bush speechwriter David Frum called the pick "cynical." *New York Times* columnist David Brooks wrote that Palin "seems to compensate for her lack of experience with brashness and excessive decisiveness."

And here may be the crux of why Palin gets so deeply under her critics' skin—in a way that McCain does not, and that any number of Republican women, from senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and Elizabeth Dole to businesswoman Carly Fiorina or Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, if put on the ticket, would not. "She comes across as defiantly in love with a kind of culture and way of being that is so antithetical to everything we have always looked for in a politician," says J. David Miller, a clinical professor of psychiatry at George Mason University in Virginia. "Even when a politician is conservative, those of us who are liberal can say at least he is respectful of intellect, reads, or arrives at views through a process of analysis." But Palin justifies her arguments, her very presence on the ticket, not just by her experience as mayor of tiny Wasilla, or governor of sparsely populated Alaska, but because, as she said in the debate, "It was my connection to the heartland of America."



'FOR ME,' SHE SAYS, 'THE HEELS ARE ON, THE GLOVES ARE OFF'



'SHE MIRRORS her supporters with her folksy phrases, and also reassures them'

She makes the case that proximity—whether to Russia or to Middle America—really matters, and is a more legitimate source of knowledge or experience than reading or studying or legislating on national issues in the U.S. Senate. "Her ideas seem to come to her through an inculcation or osmosis," says Miller. "I think it's almost like a tribal sensibility—*this* is who my people are." To her supporters, that's a big part of the appeal. "She not only mirrors these folks, with her folksy phrases and ordinary pastimes, but also reassures them that they are okay—lovable and therefore safe—because she so clearly seems to love herself," Miller adds.

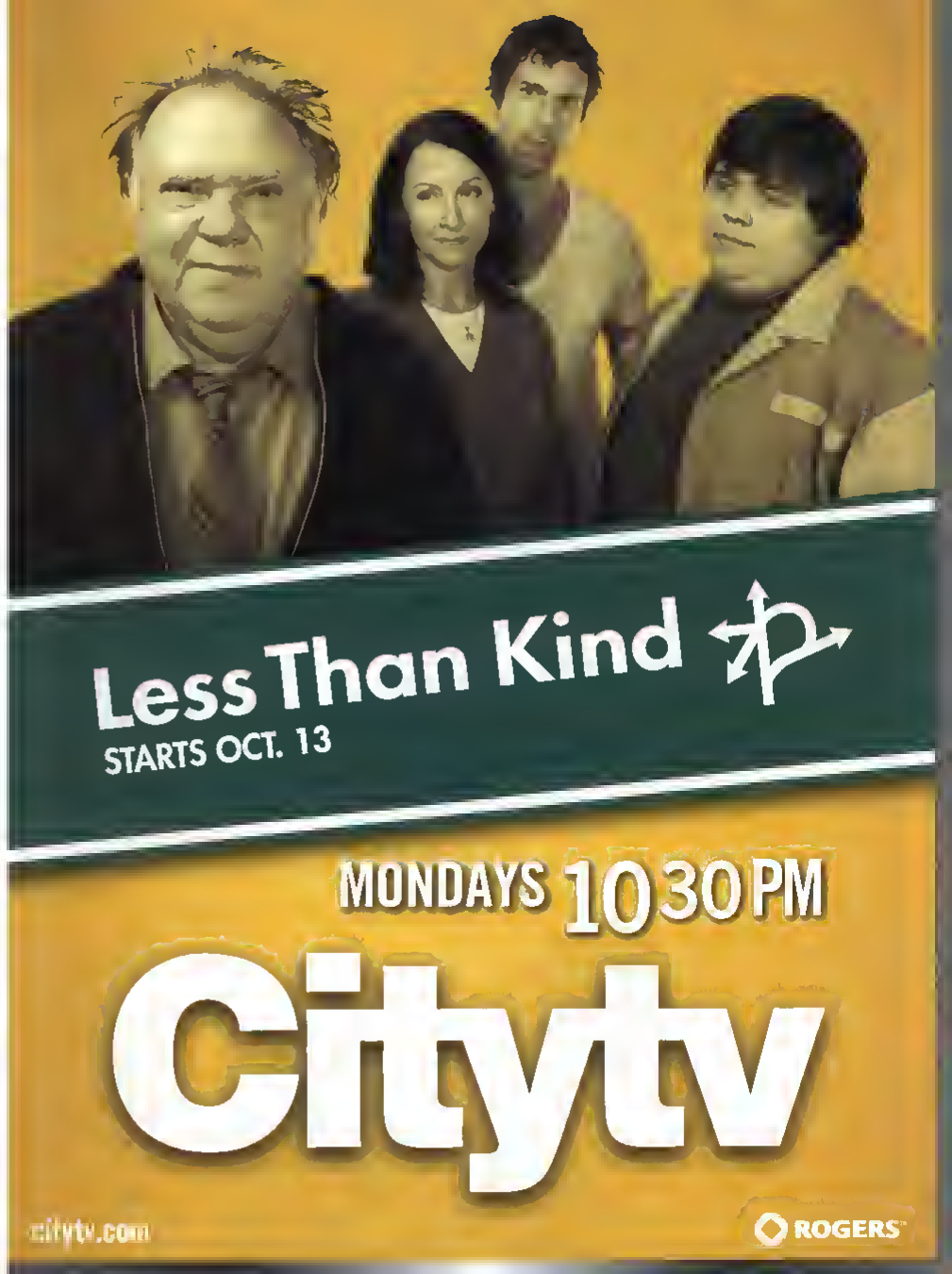
Palin seems to relish the effect she has on her critics, especially feminists. At a campaign rally in Carson, Calif., on Oct. 4, she took aim at them, telling the cheering crowd about a quotation from former secretary of state Madeleine Albright. "Now she said it, I didn't. She said, 'There's a place in hell reserved for women who don't support other women.'" Palin said she read it on her Starbucks mocha cup. (The actual quote said "help" other women.)

But for some Palin haters, Obama's rise in the polls has tempered their emotions about the candidate. "It's October, it's a very different world. The stock market is down. I think Sarah Palin is basically irrelevant on the current issues," says history professor Wiener, who says he is no longer obsessed. But Palin, who has stepped into a new, more aggressive role, has no intention of becoming irrelevant. "For me, the heels are on, the gloves are off," she told Republican donors on Monday in Naples during a trip through Florida, one of the many swing states where McCain finds himself trailing since the financial crisis began. And at the rally in Carson, she said that Obama is "palling around with terrorists," referring to Obama's association with a co-founder of the 1960s-era Weather Underground, and citing as proof a *New York Times* article—despite its conclusion that "the two men do not appear to have been close."

At another Florida rally on Monday, she stepped it up, telling supporters that Obama "launched his political career in the living room of a domestic terrorist!" She told conservative columnist William Kristol that she'd like to talk more about Obama's controversial former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, despite McCain's statements that he would not raise the issue. And her constant swipes at the "media elites" are raising the temperature even more. At a rally in Clearwater, Fla., her supporters hurled obscenities at reporters. One even shouted a racial epithet at an African-American television soundman, and told him, "Sit down, boy."

It was not something that came directly from Palin. But if these are the sorts of attitudes she can incite, she will remain the stuff of nightmares—and perhaps not just for Democrats. M

CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/AP, JASON REED/REUTERS





BLACKBEARD STILL LIVES

Two hundred attacks, over $18 million in ransom: 2008 may be a record year for pirates

BY JONATHON GATEHOUSE • Fred Parle has some mementoes of the 47 days he was held hostage on a boat off the coast of Somalia this past winter: a fishing hat and an autographed 1,000-shilling note (current value 78 cents Canadian) that a senior pirate gave him as going away presents. A file of notes, drawings and doodles from the lesser thugs that the 68 year-old Irishman hopes might someday form part of a book. Occasional nightmares. And the sure knowledge that even life's most terrifying experiences eventually become quotidian. "They always had a Kalashnikov pointed at your back," he says from his home in County Sligo. "But after a while you become rather blasé."

Last Feb. 1, Parle, a marine engineer, was one of six crewmen aboard the 35-m Danish tugboat Svitzer Korsakov when it was set upon by two small boats filled with men brandishing machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, 130 km off the Somali coast. The two dozen pirates, mostly young, khat-chewing militiamen, had the drill down pat. First, they directed the boat to their home port of Eyl, where 20 more of their fellows came aboard to share guard duty and discourage any rescue attempt. Then they stripped the ship of everything that wasn't related to the engines or navigation. Finally, they fired off their US$2.5 million ransom demand to the tug's owners, and settled in for the long weeks of negotiation. "There was no politics or religion," says Parle. "Just a straight focus on the money."

With the exception of their two English-speaking leaders, the pirates were uneducated and seemed to know little about life at sea, afraid even to approach the controls on the bridge. But they had a shared commitment to keeping their meal tickets—the hostages—safe from harm. When the negotiations, conducted every afternoon by satellite phone, bogged down, there were threats, but no violence. And even after Parle and the boat's captain, Colin Darch, an Englishman, hatched a plan, sending off a coded message to Copenhagen, dousing the boat's lights, and barricading themselves in the engine room while they waited (fruitlessly) for a rescue mission from a nearby U.S. warship, there were no recriminations. "They broke down 13 watertight doors with hammers and chisels. It took them 19 hours," recalls Parle. "But they seemed more relieved that we were okay than angry. We were precious cargo."

As the weeks of captivity stretched into months, the pirates' biggest concern became the fiscal drain of guarding the Svitzer Korsakov and its tiny crew. Their leaders kvetched endlessly about the expense of the daily rations of chapatis, goat and camel's milk, and their inability to redeploy their resources toward the capture of other, potentially more lucrative vessels. In the end, Parle took it upon himself to broker a deal between his captors and the private security firm handling negotiations for the ship's owners. He won't discuss the terms of the agreement, but Capt. Darch recently told a British researcher that the pirates dropped their asking price to $900,000, and finally settled for $678,000—hand-delivered in cash.

It's been a good year for one of the world's oldest professions. With three months to go in 2008, global piracy is on pace for a record year, with just short of 200 attacks reported so far. The majority of incidents remain what some term "sea mugging"—opportunistic robberies of yachts and smaller ships travelling through long-time hot spots like the Niger Delta, the Bangladeshi coast, and the heavily travelled Strait of Malacca between Indonesia and Malaysia. But it is the more spectacular hostage takings off the lawless Somali coast that have captured the public imagination. Right now, 10 gangs with an estimated 1,000 members are plying the waters off the Horn of Africa, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Sixty ships have been attacked—more than 20 of them captured—and 12 vessels with a combined 259 seafarers are currently being held hostage. In a report released last week, Chatham House, a U.K. think tank, estimated shipping companies and governments have paid US$18 million to $30 million in ransoms since the beginning of January. And the Somali pirates are growing bolder. The demand for the release of the Ukrainian freighter MV Faina, its 21-member crew, and cargo of 33 Russian-built T-72 tanks, ammo and rocket-propelled grenades, is a cool $20 million.

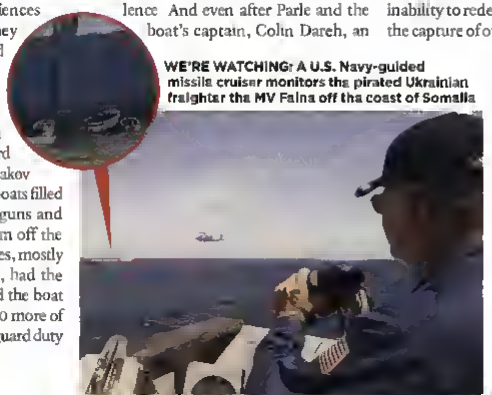
Such brazen hijackings have left the world community scrambling to formulate a response. Off the Somali coast, more than 20,000 ships a year travel through the Gulf of Aden—the gateway to the Red Sea and Suez Canal—including tankers ferrying 30 per cent of the world's oil. The United States and its war-on-terror allies already have 10 warships in the region, including the Canadian frigate HMCS Ville de Quebec, currently escorting World Food Program (WFP) shipments to Somalia. Russia and Malaysia have now dispatched additional patrol vessels to the Gulf, and this past week, the European Union announced plans to launch its own anti-piracy patrols. But the chances of stamping out the problem by simply increasing vigilance seem slim. With a safe haven ashore, no domestic authority willing, or able, to take them on, and more than four million square kilometres of water to hunt upon, the pirates retain the upper hand.

"It's a very dynamic business," says Hans Tino Hansen, the head of Risk Intelligence, a Danish security intelligence firm. A year ago, there was only one significant pirate gang—the Somali Marines, who date back to 2005—and a handful of part-timers. Now, "the success rate and relatively high ransoms are fuelling a rapid expansion," Hansen says. And as shipping companies and governments change their tactics, so do the pirates. Attacks close to shore, especially off south-central Somalia, have dropped dramatically since foreign warships began escorting WFP boats into Mogadishu's harbour. Now the pirates are focusing their energy on the Gulf of Aden, and, with the use of "mother ships," staging raids on far-distant seas. On Sept. 13, a French fishing trawler, Le Drennec, came under fire 790 km off the coast, but eventually managed to outrun its attackers.

But the single biggest factor in the piracy explosion has been the ever-deteriorating security situation on the Somali mainland. The largest and most active gangs are based out of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, notes Hansen, where the local government has been unable to pay the police and army for months. As a result, security forces are more inclined to join the heavily armed pirates than take them on.

The crews have also cannily recruited from many of the country's powerful militias and clans, and seem willing to kick some of their new-found wealth "upstairs" to politicians and community elders. For example, it is widely believed that Abdullahi Yusuf, a native Puntlander and president of the Western-backed Transitional Federal Government, Somalia's notional authority, receives "goodwill" contributions from the ransoms. And there are reports that an entire pirate economy has sprung up in towns like Eyl, with accountants, drivers, home builders, technology suppliers and even restaurants that cater meals for the hostage crews.

For the moment, at least, shipping companies seem willing to accept the relatively



WE'RE WATCHING: A U.S. Navy-guided missile cruiser monitors the pirated Ukrainian freighter the MV Faina off the coast of Somalia

YANNIS KONTOS/POLARIS/PANOS REUTERS PAUL MELCHER/REX FEATURES AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ARR! ARRESTED pirates on a ship in Mogadishu in 1996. Ten gangs with 1,000 members work around the Horn of Africa.

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small risk of piracy in the region (60 attacks, however spectacular, mean that 99.999 per cent of ships still pass through the Gulf unscathed) as a cost of doing business. Taking the much longer, and stormier, Cape of Good Hope route between Europe and Asia can add US$20,000 to $30,000 a day in fuel and crew costs. In fact, the growing piracy problem has spawned a whole parallel industry of specialized insurers, risk analysts and crisis management firms. Seacurus, a Gateshead, U.K.-based insurance broker, has been offering kidnap and ransom policies for both shipowners and crew since 2005. "We realized there was a gap in standard marine coverage," says Capt. Thomas Brown, the firm's managing director. The Lloyd's of London backed policies cover not only the ransom, but associated costs like negotiators, interpreters, public relations specialists, rest and rehabilitation expenses for hostage crews, and "reasonable costs of plastic surgery." Business was slow at first, but as of late, the phone has been ringing off the hook, says Brown. He declined to discuss the cost of such policies (some media reports suggest the going rate is now $9,000 per transit of the Gulf of Aden), but acknowledges that the premiums have seen a tenfold increase in recent months. Given the region's unique challenges, it is still good value, says Brown. "You've got 1,000 pirates patrolling the water, so delivering $1 million cash in a rubber boat off the port of Eyl is a pretty scary prospect for those who have to do it."

MARINE INSURANCE PLANS NOW COVER RANSOMS, HOSTAGE REST AND REHAB, EVEN PLASTIC SURGERY



THE FADE T, which carries 5,000 tonnes of food to Somalia. Aid ships are often hit

It was the Malaysian navy that reportedly performed the delicate task when the Malaysian International Shipping Company paid a rumoured $4 million to liberate two of its ships and 79 crew late last month. But most shipowners are turning to private firms to handle the logistics and safely retrieve their hostages. Gray Page, an Oxford, U.K., maritime security and investigations group, is one of several companies offering up pirate expertise. James Wilkes, the managing director, won't talk specifics, citing confidentiality agreements, but allows it is a difficult business. "These guys are by no means chancers or amateurs. They are competent and hardened, and they know what they are doing." Wilkes says the ransom demands that are reported in the press are often far different than the sums that end up being paid. But negotiations are almost always lengthy, complicated by the many governments—representing the interests of multinational crews and owners—that want to be involved. However, he defends the security firms as essential and experienced go-betweens. "We're not in this to profit," says Wilkes. "You'd have to be very hard-hearted and cynical to say we've got a good business here."

If there is an upside to being captured by Somali pirates, it is that they too seem to attach a value to human life—albeit a strictly monetary one. Unlike their "sea mugging" counterparts in other parts of the world, they are rarely violent with their prisoners. (Two hostages have reportedly died, but it appears both succumbed to pre-existing medical conditions.) When French commandos captured part of a gang that had seized a luxury yacht this past April, they found a rule book that banned the mistreatment of captives, and specifically forbade sexual abuse.

In that aspect, these modern-day pirates seem to have reached some of the same conclusions as their 15th- and 19th-century forebears, who developed complex codes to govern their business and interactions. Peter Leeson, an economist at Virginia's George Mason University and author of the forthcoming book, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economy of Pirates*, says there are other similarities, including evidence that the Somali gangs have also come up with a set formula for dividing the loot, and even a compensation scale for industrial injuries—US$15,000 to the families of those killed "in action." (Blackbeard-era pirates paid 600 pieces of eight for the loss of a right leg, 400 for the left.) "I think the closest comparison might be the privateers, or Barbary pirates," says Leeson, noting that the Somalis also enjoy at least some state backing and external financing. The chief difference, says the economist, might be in their strong links to shore. "It seems these modern pirates are integrated into society in a way that their 18th-century counterparts were not. After plundering, they go back to their regular lives."

It's a connection that isn't lost on Fred Parle. Even after his seven weeks in captivity, the Irishman maintains a measure of sympathy for the men who held him at gunpoint. The long, dull days gave him plenty of opportunity to converse with his English-speaking captors and delve into their motives. "The piracy money goes to feed hungry children and send kids to school. Maybe buy a camel," says Parle. "Somalia's a mess."

Being captured by pirates was both the scariest and most exciting experience of his life, he says. And despite the lingering effects of his ordeal, the 68-year-old is considering putting back out to sea. He's in overdraft at the bank, and with only a small government pension, has just sold his house to pay the bills. "I'd just like to slide into retirement and forget the whole thing," says Parle. "But if somebody came to me with a job, I'm in a situation where I wouldn't say no." M

THE ISSUE IN...

SEATTLE: BEAUTY SALON MUST DISPOSE OF FISH

Tuyet "Tweety" Bui had been running a beauty treatment in her salon in which Chinese "chin chin" fish nibble customers' fingers and feet to remove dead skin. But the Seattle Department of Licensing has informed Tweety that all implements in manicures and pedicures must be sterilized, so the chin chins are now unemployed. Said a spokeswoman: "You can clean files and other equipment, but there is no way to sanitize live fish."

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MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL.

Forget April in Paris . . . try Xmas in Iraq

BY SUSAN MOHAMMAD • If April in Paris has gotten tiresome, why not vacation in Iraq instead? Tourism to the ill-fated country is growing even though Iraq may be the last place many would chose to unwind. Despite the violence in the south, a company in California is planning a second tour of the mostly stable north after its last excursion attracted enough interest for a wait list. For US$5,860, Distant Horizons offers a 12 day visit to the autonomous Kurdish region to explore largely untouched ancient historical and religious sites. Other companies are cashing in on the historical gold mine there, too. Terre Ennere, a Parisian tourism company, offers an eight day "Christmas in Iraq" voyage for $3,340 to celebrate the holiday in Ankawa—a Christian suburb in the regional capital of Erbil. "We don't use Baghdad at all. We fly in and out of Erbil," says Janet Moore, the owner of Distant Horizons, which specializes in destinations "off the beaten path."

Moore has taken her own children to northern Iraq and insists safety is a priority (she cancelled this year's tour of Afghanistan for security reasons). The trip itinerary includes visiting the Erbil citadel (which UNESCO states is one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in the world), seeing the


TOURISTS CAN see Saddam's palace, then go roast a sheep

remains of one of Saddam's palaces, and an Assyrian Christian monastery founded in 361 CE. Tourists also visit Neanderthal caves, barbecue a freshly slaughtered sheep at a mountain picnic with locals, and visit the holy Yezidi community of Lalish, where followers of that faith (with elements of Islam, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and the Levantine religion) trace their calendar back almost 7,000 years.

Baghdad International Airport remains closed to commercial flights, but Austrian Airlines now makes four (often full) weekly runs from Vienna to Erbil—making Paris so last year. M

SUKREE SUKPLANG/REUTERS EPA

Starving citizens flee North Korea


MANY NORTH KOREANS make it to Thailand, only to be sent back

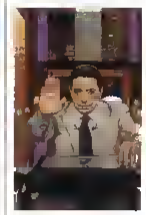
BY PATRICIA TREALE • For ordinary North Koreans, the coming months are looking bleak. This year's harvest will produce only about 75 per cent of the country's basic needs. And so far the secretive dictatorship hasn't asked for help from South Korea since that nation's new conservative government cut off unconditional aid earlier this year. This summer the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned that the situation would "exacerbate food insecurity for 6.5 million North Koreans already at risk of hunger," raising the spectre of a famine like that of the 1990s that killed an estimated two million people. Tae Keung ha, president of a Seoul based radio station that broadcasts into the North, estimates that more than 100,000 have already starved to death this year.

Because the heavily guarded border between North and South Korea is impassable, the main migration route for those fleeing the hermit kingdom goes through China to a third country, often Thailand, before ending up in the South. But as numbers increase, and Seoul falls behind in processing them, a bottleneck has developed in Thailand. There, the North Koreans are considered illegal migrants, not refugees, and can be sent back. Last week Reuters reported that Seoul was contemplating building refugee centres in Thailand, though Bangkok rejects the idea.

And for the more than 14,000 North Koreans who've made it to the South, adjusting to life in the fast paced capitalist society has not been easy. Given little resettlement aid, they discover that work is hard to find. Some decide to move on and seek asylum elsewhere. This week Seoul announced a crackdown, including possible criminal prosecution, on those wanting to move abroad. Kim Ho Nyeon of the Unification Ministry states "We need to curb this kind of fake asylum seeking, which is not desirable and creates room for cross-border disputes." M

Egyptians find hope, on a game show

BY CHRIS SELLEY • Pitting one couple against another in a test of their wits and knowledge of their partners isn't the most original game show idea. Some might call it a rip-off. But on Egypian state television's *al Beit Betak*, originality is beside the point. Every night during Ramadan, the show offered contestants a truly life altering proposition: win a brand new apartment and settle down with your betrothed, or renew an indefinite and humiliating lease with your parents. It's nothing if not topical. In Egypt, where property ownership is considered a binding prerequisite for marriage but even modest accommodations have become unaffordable for much of the middle class, the insntution of matrimony is widely believed to be in full-blown crisis. The winners of one episode, both gainfully employed English teachers, had been engaged for eight long years.


GAME SHOW? Or 'fascinating sociological case study'?

Mona Abaza, a sociology professor at the American University in Cairo, calls the show "a fascinating sociological case study." She attributes its enormous popularity to the "real middle-class" contestants—"educated school-teachers who end up working in factories," for example, to whom the average Egyptian can relate. And while parading such people before a national television audience might seem a risky strategy for an autocratic government often accused of contempt for the average citizen, Abaza suggests the regime considers the show a chance to appear open—and benevolent—while continuing to crush street-level dissent.

But *al-Beit Betak* offers no lasting solutions. Studies estimate the typical Egyptian wedding costs $6,000—more than four times the average annual income—and Abaza sees little evidence that couples are willing to consider more frugal nuptials or other pragmatic concessions. As a result, the average Egyptian man now marries at age 31, after a period of arrested development that has been linked to problems such as depression and sexual violence—things well beyond the abilities of a game show to fix. M

FREEDOM 95?

The stock market is in free fall, and the economy is just beginning to suffer. Will you ever be able to retire? Well, that depends...

BY DUNCAN HOOD AND JASON KIRBY

For more than a decade, Trish McAuliffe and her husband, Jim, have lived with a financial sword hanging over their heads

Trish and Jim went to work for General Motors in Windsor, Ont., right around the same time in the early 1980s. It was 1996 when they got their first termination letters—notices that they would be put on "indefinite layoff" within a few months. They had a toddler and a baby at home, and had just bought a house. Jim, who was 31 at the time, came down with shingles, which his doctor attributed to extreme stress.

Their jobs were saved when thousands of older workers accepted voluntary buyouts, cutting down the number of layoffs. But soon, another termination notice arrived, then another, and another. Finally, in 2004, after years of flirting with financial ruin, the McAuliffes decided to move to Oshawa, Ont. GM was cutting back operations in southwestern Ontario, but had just invested $2.2 billion in its Oshawa facilities. They pulled up stakes, said goodbye to family and friends and moved four hours east in search of stability. They were in their new home for a year before the axe fell again, then again and again—three termination notices in about 36 months. Each time they received what amounts to a stay of execution. "We've had these death notices over us for three years now," she says. "We're terminally ill, but we haven't died yet."

But with the global economy now slinking inexorably toward recession and worldwide financial markets lapsing in and out of panic, Trish, now 47, admits she's wondering if and when that next letter might arrive, and what it will mean when it does. She alternates between worry and resignation. Her kids are 13 and 14, and will be off to university soon. She knows that they'll have to rack up significant debt to get a degree. She knows that if she and Jim lose their jobs, "the house will be the first thing to go ... we'll have to downsize."

"It's like a feeling of gut rot that sits in your stomach," she says. "When you get the letter, it feels like people are pitying you. I hate that feeling. My kids hate it."

It's little comfort to know that in the past month, millions of Canadians have come to share her sense of dread. Canada's stock market has plunged and all the latest economic numbers point to recession. This week economists confirmed that they expect Canada's GDP to contract through the remainder of 2008 and the first few months of 2009. That certainly means more job cuts, less consumer spending and no end of anxiety.

What started as a brush fire among heavily indebted U.S. homeowners who bought wildly overpriced homes they couldn't afford has grown and spread into an international conflagration that threatens the stability of the world's biggest lending institutions, and every company that relies on credit to fund its operations. That, combined with the stunning market declines of the past two months, raises frightening scenarios for the millions of Canadians who, over the past 20 years, bought hundreds of billions of dollars in mutual funds, pouring their retirement savings into the stock market in the hope and belief that a generation of steady economic growth would translate into a retirement of beach vacations, summers at the cottage, and a hefty legacy left for the kids. Instead, millions find themselves with decimated retirement funds, declining real estate values and uncertain job prospects—all of it hitting at the very moment that they expected to be cruising toward an easier pace of life.

It used to be that McAuliffe, a third-generation auto worker, worried mainly about the next year's mortgage payments, and whether she could afford to give her kids all the things they wanted. Now her fears are bigger, and more far-reaching. She worries for her job. "You know, I used to say I wouldn't even get out of bed for $10 or $12 an hour. I really used to wonder how people survived on that kind of money," she says. "Now sometimes I think I might just have to." She's desperately hoping she can hang on at GM until her pension kicks in five years from now. Even then, she wonders if GM can weather this storm to pay her retirement benefits.

This much is certain: Canada will survive. The market will stop falling, consumer confidence will return, and the economy will grow again. But how long will it take? How much further will it fall? And what will be left of a nation's retirement dreams by then?





MARK BLINCH/REUTERS, SAM JAVANROUH/TOPLEFTPIXEL.COM

THE CLOSER you are to retirement, the harder you'll be hit by the market panic

Up until a few weeks ago, the experts said it couldn't happen here. Anyone who raised even the possibility of a Canadian recession was dismissed out of hand. Economists were quick to point out that we don't have ridiculous personal debt levels like they do in the U.S. House prices have risen, but not to the crazy bubble heights that homes in Florida and Arizona had. Most importantly, Canada has oil. As long as people in China, India and the other developing nations kept buying new cars and building new factories, they would need oil, and that would fuel this country's continued prosperity. But growth in the developing world is now sputtering. China's main stock market index, the Shanghai Composite, has dropped by a stunning 60 per cent over the past year, and there have been similar market drops in Brazil and Russia. The entire global economy is gearing down, which means less demand, not only for oil, but for copper, nickel, wood pulp and fertilizer too.

Canada relies on commodities for about half of its export revenue, and the Bank of Canada's Commodity Price Index has lost a quarter of its value since July, as oil has sunk from US$145 a barrel to US$90. The S&P/TSX Composite index has dropped by 35 per cent since mid-June, and respected businesspeople such as Fairfax Financial Holdings chairman Prem Watsa say it could have another 20 percentage points to go. Americans have stopped spending, and domestic manufacturing, which supplies the U.S. with everything from auto parts to airplanes, has hit a wall. "The Canadian economy, which has been only barely above water for nearly a year... is now expected to post an official recession," a report from UBS warned this week.

This development is even worse than it sounds. Until now, many economists had hoped that the credit crunch might be successfully contained in the financial markets. Yes, the Dow Jones, the S&P 500 and the TSX would fall off a cliff, but it would be a headache mainly for investment bankers and traders. It would have relatively little effect on the lives of most Canadians. But when a purely financial crisis spills over to cause an economic recession, it's another matter altogether. Bank of Nova Scotia chief economist Warren Jestin says that the word "recession" may not even apply to what's happening now, given its unusual underpinnings in the markets. "In the old days, the financial markets were just reacting to the real economy. Now, the financial markets are taking on much more force," he says. "Now we're finding that the financial markets themselves can be the driver of the real economy. In my view, it's unprecedented."

If it used to be bankers and traders who got crushed by market crashes, this disaster is hitting ordinary Canadians right where they live this week, as millions across the country rip open their investment statements for September and gasp in horror. Many will find that they have lost years of growth—even those investors who played it safe and diversified their investments. The losses will hit every investor hard, but it's the 5.7 million boomers who hope to retire over the next 10 years who will suffer the most. Right now, Canada is gearing up for the largest retirement wave in our history. Statistics Canada predicts that the wave will peak in 12 years, and it will mark the first major wave of retirees who have attempted to fund much of their retirement themselves. Previous generations relied overwhelmingly on pension plans and government benefits. The investing was done for them and the benefits were guaranteed. But during the 1980s and 1990s, companies cut back on pensions and boomers flocked to mutual funds. Over the last 20 years, the amount of money invested in Canadian funds has rocketed from $25 billion to $700 billion. Now those boomers are on their own. Their life savings are exposed to the mercurial will of the markets, and no one is guaranteeing them anything.

Those small investors were often told that if they spread their money around, they'd be okay no matter what happened. But over the past several weeks, world markets have entered a rare downward spiral. Everything—housing, Canadian stocks, U.S. stocks, international stocks—it's all going south at once. The impact is already hitting home. A new Angus Reid poll for *Maclean's* shows that three-quarters of Canadians are concerned that the country is heading into recession, and more than half are worried about their personal debt level.

Carl Anderson, a retired school principal in North York, Ont., is a much better investor than most. He's been shovelling money into his portfolio of blue-chip, high dividend stocks for more than 20 years, and though he lives a middle-class life on a modest income with his wife, Thelma, he's managed to build up a portfolio of $2.5 million. Despite his investing acumen, his portfolio has been ravaged by the markets. "I've dropped half a million dollars," he says. "A lot of it has been banks. My oil stocks are dropping too. Between the two of them I'm getting crucified."

Anderson, now 77, says he's been through several nasty drops in his life, and this ranks up with the worst of them. He's not too worried about himself, because he can afford to leave the money in his account and live off the dividends, but few are so lucky. "This period we're going through is ugly, I'm not going to sugar-coat it," says Patricia Lovett-Reid, senior vice-president at TD Waterhouse. "It's much more difficult for someone entering into retirement in a bear market than someone who has had some time to see compounding in their portfolio." The timing of the crash will be crippling for some. Because of the way compounding works, a huge portion of a typical Canadian's retirement portfolio depends on those last few critical years. If an investment is growing by eight per cent a year, for instance, then the account will double every nine years. Missing that last doubling can mean the difference between retiring with $1 million and retiring with $500,000. In the current market, an investor who has sweated for 30 years to build up a $500,000 nest egg could now find his portfolio a full third smaller than it would have been.

The standard advice when the market dives like this is to hold tight. Don't panic. Don't sell. Don't even open your statements. Eventually the market will recover, and everything will be alright. But what they don't tell you is that recovery can take years. When the market crashed in 1974, it took four years to recover. When it crashed in 2000, it took almost six. For many Canadians, waiting out this storm will be extraordinarily difficult.

For starters, more Canadians are counting on using the equity in their homes to retire than ever before, and that equity is now in danger. According to StatsCan, three out of 10 families have no RRSPs or corporate pensions, and a high percentage of our wealth is tied up in our homes. Millions planned to tap that wealth by downsizing to a smaller home, and some hoped to inherit family property from their parents. Not a bad plan in a rising market, but a recent report from Merrill Lynch Canada forecasts a "sustained downturn" in the national housing market, with cities such as Regina, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria particularly susceptible to tumbling prices. And historically, housing prices tend to move like oil tankers: once they get going in a particular direction, they're slow to turn around. If we do enter a real national housing slump, some say it could be a decade before house prices recover.



'I WANTED TO RETIRE BY NOW. I SAY IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME. BUT IT DOES.'

There have already been more than two million residential foreclosures south of the border since the crisis began in 2006. In Canada, it's often said that subprime mortgages never accounted for more than a tiny fraction of the market. But Andrew Bury, one of Vancouver's top insolvency lawyers, says that's misleading. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation recently tightened its rules, but until this month, thousands of Canadians were able to buy homes with no money down and mortgages of up to four decades. "How is that not a subprime loan?" he says. "We tend to poo-poo the Americans and say the subprime mortgage problem was theirs, not ours, but I don't think that's true at all."

That's bad news for everyone, but especially for the banks. So far, Canada's big five have stood out as shining paragons of restraint and solidity, as lesser banks in the U.S., England, France, Germany and even Iceland have collapsed in tangled webs of debt. But cracks are beginning to show here as well. "The U.S. economy is clearly slowing down, and as it does, our economy will slow down too," says Alan White, a professor of finance at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. "That will cause an increase in defaults on loans in Canada, which will hurt the banks' profitability."

Collectively, the banks have written off more than $10 billion in worthless mortgage backed investments, and there's more to come. As the credit markets tighten, it's getting more and more expensive for the banks to borrow from each other and from the international banking community, so the banks are raising rates on mortgages and lines of credit to pass along those higher costs to customers. And, as Norm Rothery, a chartered financial analyst and founder of *Stingyinvestor.com*, points out, as Canadian home prices decline, there will be many more foreclosures. "That's what killed the U.S. banks, exposure to bad mortgages in their own country," Rothery says. "If I ask myself which Canadian bank is most likely to fall, the best answer I can come up with is that you might want to look at which one is the most exposed to real estate in B.C. and Alberta."

For those close to retirement, the combination of all these factors is deeply depressing. "They've got a triple whammy," says TD's Lovett-Reid. "They've got the bear market, plus they have to take money out, and they have to contend with inflation." There may be only one option, and it won't be a pleasant one: to throw their retirement plans out the window and just keep on working. "I'm hearing people say Freedom 55 has just become Freedom 95," says Lovett-Reid. "I don't think it's that catastrophic, but that's certainly what they're feeling."



MANUFACTURING LAYOFFS and distressed homeowners aren't just an American phenomenon

DAVID MCNEW/GETTY

Every day, Andrew Bury sees the fallout from the global financial crisis first hand. As a partner with Gowling Lafleur Henderson in Vancouver, he's had to scramble to keep up with the spate of foreclosures in the city. This past Monday in Room 32 of the B.C. Supreme Court, for instance, Bury had no sooner finished dealing with one all too-typical foreclosure—a young father and business owner who could no longer keep up with his mortgage payments and was losing his home—when the court prepared to hear the next foreclosure case. Over the last year, the number of files on his desk has doubled, he says, with most of that increase coming in the last six months. "People are finding themselves with a cash flow problem and no way to bail themselves out," says Bury.

As it becomes painfully clear that Canadians will also be caught up in the financial crisis encircling the globe, there's likely to be pressure on government and businesses to rethink many long-held assumptions about retirement and the economy.

If there's any good news in all this, it's that the vast majority of government and company-sponsored retirement plans are well-funded for at least the next decade or two, says Malcolm Hamilton, an actuary with Mercer, an HR consulting firm in Toronto. That means the pension plans have enough assets on hand to cover payments to retirees during that time. Serious problems could arise, though, if the stock market rout deepens or lasts for an extended period of time. Pension plans rely on gains from the stock market to help meet the needs of future retirees. If the plans suffer losses in their portfolios, employers will have to inject cash to shore them up, something companies that are also struggling with a recession may find impossible to do.

Still, those with pensions are likely the lucky ones—most Canadian workers are on their own. According to figures released by StatsCan, only about 38 per cent of Canadian workers are part of a registered pension plan, and that number has been declining. And of those private sector workers who do belong to a pension plan, a growing number are in defined contribution plans. Unlike defined benefit plans, which guarantee a specific amount of money upon retirement, how much you get out of a defined contribution plans depends entirely on how much you put in and how well the markets perform. Which is why Hamilton expects there will be renewed calls for the Canada Pension Plan to be overhauled to include larger payments to retirees. Currently, CPP is paying retirees over 65 an average of $5,800 a year, plus $5,700 more in old age security. "If things get desperate enough there will be pressure on the government to expand the plan," he says. But, he warns, such a move would not be a cure for all the problems facing older workers. If CPP benefits were boosted retroactively, it would create a massive burden for future generations. On the other hand, if changes were made to the plan going forward, they would have very little impact on those retiring any time soon. "The one solution is fiscally responsible but politically unattractive, but the other is an economic non starter because it gives a huge freebie that will have to be paid for by future generations," he says.

In the meantime, many are simply giving up on their retirement dream. With 40 years in the forestry industry, Jarmo Laine, a Vancouver Island logger had hoped to be on the road to retirement by now. But after years of hardship in the forestry sector, made worse by the collapse of the U.S. housing market, Laine, 57, has found himself out of work with little in the way of savings. His union pension plan would only provide him with $1,100 a month, and with a sizable mortgage on his home, that just won't cut it. Faced with bleak job prospects on the island, he recently flew up to Alberta's oil boomtown, Fort McMurray, to find work. But even then, several companies told him he is too old to hire. Laine is understandably bitter, both at the treatment workers have received from the forestry companies, and about the prospect of having to pull up roots in Saltair, B.C., and move to another province to find work. "I'd wanted to be retired now, but that isn't going to happen," he says. "I tell people it don't bother me none, but it does." M

RON BULL/TORONTO STAR



STILL GROUNDED

Bombardier's private jet unit is soaring, but service is a problem

BY SSAN SILCOFF • Rebecca Loranger has had a Learjet in the repair shop for months, and she's not happy The director of sales for Charlotte, N C.–based Corporate Fleet Services, a dealer that trades in Learjets and other Bombardier corporate jets, brought a 10-year-old plane to a Bombardier service centre in Dallas for a pre-buy inspection on June 30 She expected it back within five weeks As of last month, she'd been waiting 11. Even worse, the repair bill had jumped to US$90,000 from US$60,000 "It's nothing short of a nightmare," she said "The right hand can't tell what the left hand is doing" At rival Gulfstream and Cessna facilities, she says, service would have been much faster

This isn't an isolated problem In fact, Montreal-based Bombardier has a reputation for the worst after sales service in the business that it can't seem to shake Its corporate jet division—whose high profile customers include Oprah Winfrey and Bill Gates, Exxon Mobil and Wal-Mart, plus Russian oligarchs, Brazilian beef barons and an Asian casino magnate—may have almost single handedly lifted the fortunes of the industrial giant But for the past five years Bombardier has shown up dead last in the influential industry surveys of aircraft operators on customer support by U S –based journals *Professional Pilot* and *Aviation International News*

The surveys track such categories as quality of service centres and how long owners are forced to keep malfunctioning planes grounded until the manufacturer can ship out spare parts Nobody keeps Oprah waiting, so more than bragging rights are at stake "You sell the next airplane with service on the current airplane," says Murray Smith, publisher of *Professional Pilot*

The results are sharply at odds with Bombardier's standing as the industry leader in one of the world's most elite businesses, which gathered for its big annual convention in Orlando this week amid fears of a global recession Its Learjet, Challenger and Global planes list for between US$9 million and US$50 million, and the three lines accounted for billings of US$3.4 billion in the first half of 2008, up 24 per cent from a year earlier The whole industry is undergoing an unprecedented boom, and the wait for some Bombardier models is now up to 46 months "We expect demand to be strong for the next decade," Bombardier's aerospace chief Guy Hachey said this month



RICH CLIENTS LIKE OPRAH HATE TO BE KEPT WAITING

But Bombardier's reputation for poor after-sales service calls into question whether it can remain on top of the game In the *Pro Pilot* survey, Bombardier placed last in six out of seven categories among the five main jet makers The company didn't fare much better in the *AIN* survey Bombardier's archrival, Gulfstream Aerospace, topped both surveys

The rankings are especially disappointing because Bombardier has pulled out all the stops in the past two years in an effort to improve after sales service It has spent tens of millions of dollars to bulk up its spare parts inventory, launch 24 hour response centres and hire 17 more technicians That investment seems to have yielded results. The company says it has cut the number of days it takes to respond to a customer warranty claim to seven from 19 Bombardier service centres enjoy a 92 per cent satisfaction rating according to a recent internal poll, up from 75 per cent "Our goal is nothing short of providing our customers with a world-class experience—when compared across all industries—and we will continue to invest until we achieve our goal," says James Hoblyn, president of customer services and support with Bombardier Aerospace But a bad reputation can be a stubborn thing to shake

The good news: *AIN* noted a significant improvement in rankings for Learjet in its survey, and many customers quoted through out both surveys acknowledged the company's progress. "Bombardier has been working very hard, but the rest of the world is not standing still," says Smith Said Hachey: "Obviously we're not happy with the fact we didn't make more progress" in the surveys. "We have re-energized [efforts] to improve the robustness of what we do."

That's good, because holding the crown for best service matters as jet makers expand sales internationally Once a cottage industry, corporate jet billings tripled in the late 1990s, hitting a record US$12 billion in 2001 Billings surpassed US$18 4 billion last year and are expected to top US$30 billion annually within a decade, as wealthy buyers seek to avoid flying commercial That is, so long as the world economy doesn't completely tank

Either way, Bombardier has its work cut out, starting with convincing long-time customers that things are improving "I'm a [Bombardier] dealer, so I'll always buy anything and everything out there," says Loranger But based on her recent experience, she worries, "another end user might steer clear" M

EMPLOYEE OF THE WEEK

MISSILE LAUNCHER SO COOL IT'S POSSIBLY A BLAST

Capt Paul Borowiecki of the Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota thought it would be "a cool thing" to have an obsolete missile-launch control device as a souvenir Memo to captain: way not cool The U S Air Force is conducting a hearing into whether Borowiecki deserves to be court-martialled for mishandling a classified item Although the domino-sized device is out of date, it could have been used to detonate a missile, the hearing learned

ERIC PIERMONT/GETTY ALEXANDRA BUXBAUM/CP

Facts and fairy tales of Paulson's bailout



STEVE MAICH

Politics and business are full of convenient myths and useful fictions—that democratic government is driven primarily by the will of the people, for instance Deep down we suspect these things aren't exactly true, but they help keep the system moving

These little delusions have their uses, but there are times when it's important to focus on cold, hard truths And when public officials decide they are going to spend close to a trillion dollars of taxpayer money to rescue a slew of private financial institutions from their own foolhardy misadventures, it's time to cut the bull Last week, the U.S Congress approved Henry Paulson's controversial US$700 billion bailout plan, after the House initially rejected it just four days earlier How did they manage that abrupt about face? In part, they did it by offering a handful of handy myths, designed to make Main Street feel better about funding a gargantuan economic do-over for the titans of Wall Street

The first of these myths revolves around the idea that the plan will save the economy from the deep and painful recession lurking around the corner For the average person on the street, this is the whole point of the Paulson plan, but even a cursory glance at the most recent economic data blows this hopeful idea sky-high On the very day that the House of Representatives was ratifying the bailout, the U.S. Labour Department reported that 159,000 Americans lost their jobs in September—the worst one month plunge in more than five years That brought total job losses in the U.S. to 760,000 so far this year The "official" unemployment rate is holding steady at 6 1 per cent, but that doesn't really tell the whole sad story When you include people who have given up actively looking for a job (known in government jargon as "discouraged workers"), unemployment now stands at 11 per cent—the highest since 1994 U.S. manufacturing activity slipped in September to its lowest level since the month after the 9/11 terrorist attacks Josh Shapiro, an economist for MFR Inc. in New York, broke the bad news in a note to clients on Friday "A consumer-led recession is upon us, and it promises to be a serious one"

Pulling out of this funk won't begin until people get confident enough to start buying houses again. Even if Paulson's bailout can clear the decks for banks to restart lending, there will be precious few people eager to make a big investment when the economy is in the tank The more people lose their jobs, the more foreclosures we will see, and the more prices are likely to fall As of July, house prices in 20 major U.S. markets had fallen 16 3 per cent in a year and are still dropping, amid a record number of foreclosures

Well, even if it can't save America from a recession that's already begun, proponents of the rescue say at least it will strike a major blow against the greed and excesses of Wall Street. They point to the bill's prohibition on fat executive severance deals as proof This too is a fantasy The bill only prevents *new* golden parachutes for executives at companies taking part in the bailout Washington can't go back and abrogate existing employment contracts, so executives who already have their deals inked (which they all do) will still walk away with millions whenever they choose to quit, retire or get fired



Wall Street still has its golden parachutes

Does that matter? Not really, according to the mythmakers, because if the CEOs end up getting rich, the taxpayers might too! Last week, the bill's sponsors and its boosters in the media floated the idea that, in the long run, government might actually end up making big profits off the toxic mortgages it's buying from the banks They argue that these plunging assets really aren't so bad as they seem It's just that the world's biggest and most sophisticated investors are acting irrationally, they say Only government has the patience and foresight to take on all these loans, hold them to maturity and turn a profit. This is pure, giddy optimism, masquerading as rational thought Barry Ritholtz, an economist and head of Ritholtz Research, last week issued a million-dollar public wager that the Paulson plan will end up to be a "ginormous money loser" for the American public

"There are trillions of dollars sitting around in cash, yet [no investors] see any value here?" Ritholtz wrote on his blog "I guess that Hank Paulson, George Bush and Ben Bernanke—all of whom have been unequivocally, expensively, tyrannically wrong about the entire crisis from the beginning—are smarter than both the markets, and all of the private equity pools, about this paper? Does that sound right to you?" No No, it doesn't.

Nevertheless, the plan's proponents continue to insist that it's a "good deal" for the taxpayer, which brings us to the final and biggest myth of all Last week, White House spokesman Tony Fratto insisted "it is not a bailout for Wall Street" and urged reporters to drop the b word from their vocabulary By his reasoning, because government is getting an ownership stake in the ailing banks, and will get assets in return for its money, this plan should be seen as a public investment rather than a handout That's very comforting indeed, except the fact remains that the U.S taxpayer is taking on a staggering amount of debt to buy assets that nobody else wants, at prices nobody else would pay—in hopes it'll prevent an even bigger disaster than the one we're already in It's like someone putting a gun to your head and saying "don't think of this as a mugging, think of it as an investment in safety By giving me your wallet, you're helping reduce the murder rate"

Don't get me wrong, Paulson's bailout has its merits It may end up reducing the suffering for millions of people at risk of losing everything And it may give the U.S a fighting chance to rebound from a terrible mess Given our huge reliance on America's economic health, Canadians should root for its success But if this plan is going to work it is essential that we face it with clear eyes and leave the convenient fictions aside The bailout is a desperate measure for desperate times Sugar coating it only makes it harder to swallow M

steve.maich@macleans.rogers.com

MIKE THEILER/REUTERS

VANOC 2010: no Olympic freeloaders



VANOC will buy every inch of billboard space during the Games

BY BEN MACQUEEN • Few things perturb revenue-obsessed Olympic organizers so much as someone hitching a free ride on their bandwagon. Ticket scalpers and ambush advertisers are but two of the many challenges. In Beijing, scalpers were rounded up and either summarily deported, if they were foreigners, or sent for "re-education" if they were Chinese.

VANOC, the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee for the 2010 Winter Games, lacks the tools of a totalitarian state to deal with freeloaders. It has its own tactics. Consider its novel approach to online ticket sales. The first wave of tickets went on offer Oct. 3, but "no need to rush," advises VANOC. All orders between then and the closing date of Nov. 7 have an equal chance of being filled—by lottery, in the case of high-demand events like the gold medal hockey game (see *www.vancouver2010.com*). This is an attempt, in part, to thwart the usual first-come, first-served free-for-all, which is rife with abuse by scalpers and reselling agencies using computer programs to bump to the head of the Internet line. This also gives you time to save: tickets for the opening ceremony on Feb. 12, for instance, run from $185 to $1,118, though organizers stress more than half of the 1.6 million public tickets cost $100 or less. Just make sure you buy them with Visa, an Olympic sponsor and the only plastic VANOC accepts.

VANOC is also protecting sponsors by spending $40 million to buy every square inch of outdoor advertising space in B.C.'s Lower Mainland, from billboards to transit buses, during the Games. The space will be resold to Olympic sponsors, giving them prime visibility, and keeping both corporate rivals and Olympic critics from the limelight. "Priceless," a certain credit card company might say, if it were allowed to advertise. M

What could you buy for $700 billion?

BY COLIN CAMPBELL • How much is US$700 billion? As we all know by now, it's roughly the amount of money that U.S. government officials think is needed to rescue a ravaged economy from almost-certain collapse. We also know it's a seven followed by 11 zeros. Even in those basic terms, it's hard to wrap your mind around it. But there has been no shortage of attempts to put that mind-boggling number in terms normal folks can fathom.

Most often it's expressed as $2,300 for every American person (and over $9,000 for a family of four). Last week, CNN informed viewers that it was enough to buy 2,000 McDonald's apple pies for every American man, woman and child. That only raises another question—can a person even eat that much pie and live to tell about it?

Think of it this way: it's 12 times Bill Gates's fortune, explains *Slate* magazine, or the box office receipts of roughly 381 Titanic-sized blockbuster movies. How about the entire GDP of Florida? Yahoo News notes that it's about $100 billion more than the amount spent on America's social security system each year. Canadians might better wrap their minds around it this way: it's the equivalent of 210 high-end hockey sticks for every person in the country. Or enough to buy every Canadian one medium Tim Hortons coffee every day for the next 45 years.

Some have sought to express it in terms of lost opportunities. Duncan Green, head of research for Oxfam International, notes on his blog that it would "clear the accumulated debt of the 49 poorest countries in the world twice over." Oh, and it's "enough to eradicate all world poverty for over two years."



HOW about a coffee a day for all Canadians... for 45 years

Then again, $700 billion looks relatively puny next to the overall U.S. national debt, which stands at more than US$10 trillion (for CNN viewers, that's 29,000 apple pies for everyone). And it's about the same amount of money that's been spent on the Iraq war so far. In the end, it's probably best to stick with a simple answer to the question: How much is $700 billion? It's a lot. M

Caught in a Russian downdraft

BY JASON KIRBY • Well, that was fast. When Frank Stronach sold 20 per cent of Magna International to Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska last year for $1.5 billion, many observers fretted over what it would mean for the company in the years to come. Did Deripaska have ties to Russia's vicious underworld? Did he get a sweetheart deal at the expense of Magna shareholders?



DERIPASKA suddenly finds himself very short of cash

Few thought to ask the simpler question: did he actually have the money to follow through on his end of the deal?

The answer came last week when Deripaska's creditors forced him to give up his Magna stake. The oligarch reportedly faces billions in margin calls on other investments, a sign his high-profile acquisitions had left him highly leveraged. He had apparently pledged his Magna stake as collateral on other loans, and now he's been forced to surrender the shares. The man who Stronach once heralded as "the most successful Russian businessman" lost at least $600 million on his Magna investment.

But if Deripaska took a bath on Magna, so too have the company's other investors. Magna's stock had already lost nearly 50 per cent of its value since the deal with Deripaska was struck. Last week's news sent it down another 15 per cent, to the lowest level since 1995. The worry for investors is that Deripaska's 20 million Magna shares will now be dumped on the open market as the oligarch's creditors try to recoup their losses.

It's unclear yet whether Stronach will share their grief. The deal included a $150-million payment for the company founder when Deripaska bought a 50 per cent stake in a Stronach holding company. And in past years, even when Magna's shares were flagging, Stronach was nevertheless richly rewarded with tens of millions in fees, over the objections of shareholders.

Despite assurances that Magna had completed due diligence on Deripaska, the auto parts company apparently failed to consider all the possible risks, and to ensure its Russian partner was in for the long haul. M

CP PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS NEWSCOM

INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS



EVERY YEAR, THOUSANDS OF CANADIANS CONSIDER STARTING A BUSINESS. THE ONES WHO WILL SUCCEED WILL BE THE ENTREPRENEURS WITH THE BEST PLANNING AND PREPARATION. AND THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL PLANNING IS INFORMATION.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

"In today's market, the need for sound business information and knowledge is greater than ever," says Simon Harding, National Director of Strategic & Commercial Intelligence at KPMG's Advisory Services in Toronto. Information enables a businessperson to make informed decisions, mitigate risk" and better establish a foundation for starting a successful business venture," Harding says.

An entrepreneur needs information about her market, her customers, her competitors and her supply chain. Who are the key customers: what do they want or need? Will those wants or needs change? How does this product or service meet their need? How does it surpass what the competition offers?

"Most entrepreneurs fall short in the planning process," says Arlene Dickinson, President and CEO of Venture Communications, an independent marketing firm in Calgary. "They try to leap from idea to implementation, before they've done their homework."

Homework help is plentiful. Industry Canada offers a wealth of information, from research papers and statistics to links with online small-business workshops (www.ic.gc.ca/epic/site/ict-nsf/en/home). Provincially based small-business organizations provide additional resources for aspiring entrepreneurs. At Small Business BC (www.smallbusinessbc.ca), you can find tips on identifying a potential business, evaluating its prospects and assessing your own capabilities to run it.

Ultimately, all the information that you gather will help you to form a detailed plan for starting, sustaining and expanding your business. And help you to attract financing, either from a bank in the form of a loan or line of credit or from investors. Whether you're dealing with a bank, a venture capitalist or your brother, you'll need more than your enthusiasm to convince them to invest in your idea.

GREEN BUSINESS IS GOOD BUSINESS

Investors are lining up to put money into companies that promote the efficient use of energy, the development of advanced materials, and better approaches to waste reduction and water conservation. Federal and provincial governments have set up entire departments dedicated to green business practices. Public companies, from aluminum smelters to zipper manufacturers, dedicate time and money to demonstrate to investors the sustainability of their operations.

In Canada, not only do green credentials attract customers and investors, they also save money. "Organizations of all kinds are trying new ways of doing business to cut costs," says Andrew Winston, co-author of *Green to Gold: How Smart Companies Use Environmental Strategy to Innovate, Create Value and Build Competitive Advantage*. Wal-Mart, for example, cut energy costs in its refrigerated food aisles by 70 per cent by putting doors on the display cases.

"Anyone responsible for the financial matters of an organization obviously needs to pay attention to factors that can affect the flow of financing," says James Hartshorn. Hartshorn, who ensures that their sustainability initiative is operational, and is head of the Environmental and Corporate Service Division at Golder Associates Ltd. in Mississauga, a global group specializing in ground engineering and environmental services. "One of those factors, which has become increasingly important, is sustainability."

As RBC Royal Bank points out, "Not having an environmental conscience can be a liability. You could find that current and potential clients are applying environmental criteria in their assessment of your services. On the other hand, if you are seen to be proactive on the environment, it may just give you an advantage over your competitors."

Green practices make more than financial sense: they offer companies a competitive edge with consumers and improved relationships with their local communities. Reckitt Benckiser, a manufacturer of automatic dishwasher detergent, ran an ad campaign on German television promoting its products by alerting consumers to the 85 per cent reduction in water and energy costs available from a dishwasher. Boeing promotes its new 787 Dreamliner by pointing out that it uses 20 per cent less energy per passenger.

INVESTORS ARE LINING UP TO PUT MONEY INTO COMPANIES THAT PROMOTE THE EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADVANCED MATERIALS, AND BETTER APPROACHES TO WASTE REDUCTION AND WATER CONSERVATION

In the financial community, green consciousness now factors into most investment decisions. For example, a company in the U.K., called Climate Change Capital (CCC), is an investment manager and advisor specializing in the opportunities created by the transition to the low carbon economy. Global banks like HSBC, as well as brokers and investment dealers, have formed an organization called the Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change (IIGCC).



SUSTAINABLE BY CHOICE, GREEN BY NECESSITY

For companies that deal with large corporate customers, going green is no longer optional. It's a requirement for doing business. Multinationals such as Dell, L'Oréal, PepsiCo, IBM and Reckitt Benckiser now ask some suppliers to measure and disclose their carbon footprint. Measuring emissions this way will allow companies to compare their suppliers with their peers, finding cost savings by eliminating practices that waste energy.

The reasoning behind the effort is that it is not enough for businesses seeking to be greener to look to their own operations. They must also examine their supply chain to measure carbon dioxide emissions resulting from the production of the goods and services they use and sell.

"By bringing together the purchasing authority of some of the largest companies in the world, [we] will encourage suppliers to measure and manage their greenhouse gas emissions," says Paul Dickinson, chief executive office (CEO) and founder of the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). "[This Supply Chain Leadership Collaboration (SCLC)] is a key step towards a unified business approach to climate change."

MAKING GREEN PAY

"The greening of business is being driven by global macro-trends like rising energy costs, water scarcity, demographic changes, and new regulations," says Andrew L. Shapiro, Founder and CEO of GreenOrder, a sustainability strategy and marketing firm. Companies can draw attention to their compliance with environmental regulations and point out the benefits of their compliance to the community.

"Building sustainability into your life and business takes practice," says Marc Smith, an event planner in Vancouver, and founder and principal at Amuse Consulting, applies a social conscience to organizing banquets, weddings and conferences. "You have to re-think many things you do."

How does an event planner acquire green credentials? Smith uses re-usable signage at trade shows and glasses, plates and cutlery at banquets rather than disposable products. Other companies use local suppliers to reduce the impact and costs of transportation, even if they have to spend a bit more to do it. The promotional value and opportunities of green practices often outweigh any additional expense.

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THE MANY WORLDS OF NETWORKING

Just as social networks like Facebook make the world accessible to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection, business networks enable entrepreneurs and business owners to identify contacts and exchange information. LinkedIn, for example, has more than 25 million members and adds new members at a rate of about one new net worker every two seconds – that's about 1.2 million a month.

"Statistically, your chances of getting a response from someone you don't know by direct mail, telephone, or email are only two per cent," says Konstantin Guericke, LinkedIn's co-founder and vice president of marketing. "But people accept 83 per cent of our requests, which dramatically illustrates the importance of being introduced rather than cold-called in our age of information overload."

Other networks provide similar opportunities. Social Networking Services Meta List, for example, identifies 52 business networking sites such as Ryze (ryze.com), SelectMinds (selectminds.com) and RealContacts Ltd. (jobs.realcontacts.com).

Using LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), professionals from a wide variety of industries can locate former colleagues, clients and partners. They can identify experts in their industries and introduce themselves to other professionals.

Networking is essential to the success of a small business. Not only can an entrepreneur relieve the isolation that comes with starting a business, he can also keep in touch with people who understand his business and give him the encouragement and ideas that he needs to manage it properly. Few small businesses can afford to hire a team of senior managers. The right contacts can provide the same expertise, at no cost.

STATISTICALLY, YOUR CHANCES OF GETTING A RESPONSE FROM SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW BY DIRECT MAIL, TELEPHONE, OR EMAIL ARE ONLY TWO PER CENT, BUT PEOPLE ACCEPT 83 PER CENT OF OUR REQUESTS.



PUT YOUR BEST E-FOOT FORWARD

How do you use a network effectively? In an interview with Debbie Bardon of Bardon On Call Research, Konstantin Guericke of LinkedIn says business networks like his offer a forum to substantiate your credentials as a business owner with endorsements. "Ask some of your professional contacts to write endorsements for your profile," Guericke suggests. "If people are searching for someone in your category, having even one endorsement increases your chances of your profile being looked by 400 per cent."

High-quality connections help, as well. "You want to keep your connections to people that you know and trust," says Guericke, whose interview was posted on the website of Information Today Inc. "Since the only people who can find you on LinkedIn are people who are within four degrees of separation from you, it's beneficial to have the largest number of connections possible. When you go into your network page, you can see how many people you are connected to and also how they are broken down geographically and by industry."

Work piling up?





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THE IT ADVANTAGE

Small businesses in Canada now communicate with employees, customers and others in a multitude of ways, from phones to email to video, putting them in the vanguard of unified communications. "Unified communications is the real-time redirection of a voice, text or email message to the device closest to the intended recipient at any given time," according to PC Magazine. "For example, voice calls to desk phones could be routed to the user's cell phone when required. Email intended for a desktop mailbox could be sent to the user's PDA or turned into speech for a phone message."

Unified communications integrates all the systems that a business might already be using, from email to voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) telephony, so that they can work together in real time.

That enables a business to locate its employees on the road or working at home. Retail employees can use hand-held devices to conduct an on-the-spot price check for a customer and communicate at the same time with a co-worker to resolve a customer dispute.

As the underlying technology advances, the distinctions between different modes of communication such as cell phones, wireless laptops and handheld devices like BlackBerrys are becoming invisible to the average user. Communications products are becoming easier to use and require less technical knowledge.

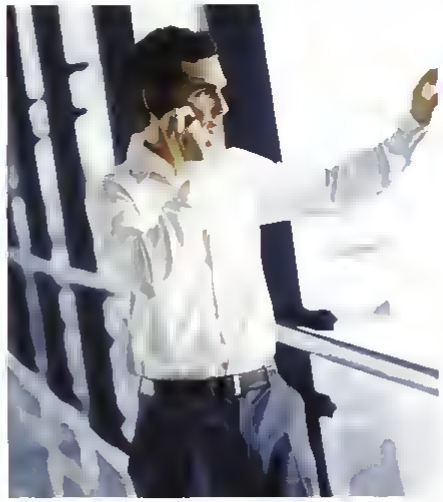
AS THE UNDERLYING TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES, THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT MODES OF COMMUNICATION SUCH AS CELL PHONES, WIRELESS LAPTOPS AND HANDHELD DEVICES LIKE BLACKBERRYS ARE BECOMING INVISIBLE.

Unfortunately, maintaining security within an environment that emphasizes simplicity and ease of access presents an enormous challenge. "The more accessible a company becomes, the more vulnerable it becomes to identity and data theft and targeted stealth attacks," says Robert Quance, MCI Canada's former general manager.

Just as viruses attack unprotected PCs, they can also attack any digital device, from a wireless laptop to a cell phone. The threat takes an almost infinite number of shapes and sizes. According to MCI Canada, spam now accounts for as much as 75 per cent of an organization's email, while more than 90 per cent of viruses enter networks through email channels.

Few small companies have the time, money or expertise to secure their electronic facilities from all threats. As an alternative, some are turning to Internet service providers and phone companies that employ teams of security personnel who remain informed about the latest threats and the latest defence systems.

MCI's Managed Scanning service, for example, scans emails for viruses, spam and inappropriate images before they reach their intended destinations. With no additional hardware or software, organizations can reduce IT administrative costs arising from internal mail maintenance and improve their productivity.



TO CATCH A THIEF

Viruses, spam, malware. They cost Canadian businesses millions of dollars a year in lost time, occupied bandwidth, reduced productivity, destroyed information and equipment maintenance. By interfering with a company's instantaneous and global communications, they also damage the company's reputation.

They can also leave companies vulnerable to sabotage and corporate espionage, allowing competitors access to a company's best-kept electronic secrets. A keylogger, for example, monitors each keystroke that a user types on a computer keyboard. It can be downloaded inadvertently as spyware and, without the user knowing it, it will upload keystroke information over the Internet periodically to whoever installed the program. According to the SANS Institute, which trains and certifies computer security professionals, as many as 9.9 million machines in North America have been infected at one time with keyloggers.

Companies can protect themselves by installing security software and updating it regularly. Or they can rely on their technology provider, phone company, Internet service provider or other third party to keep their communications networks secure.

One way or another, companies have to pay attention to security. "Not having security products is like handing out the keys to your door," says Al Davis, former Senior Product Manager of MCI Canada Hosting Services. "It's simpler than you could even imagine for hackers to root their way into your network—and to gain complete access to all of your confidential information."

THE COUPLES WHO LIVE THE LONGEST

He expresses his negative feelings, but she doesn't. Really.

BY CATHY GULLI • An Italian husband from Parma filed a lawsuit in the spring against his wife for almost $300,000, saying that her incessant nagging has rendered him impotent. "All she ever does is complain," he said. "It is extremely stressful and it has left me unable to be a man. I want some compensation."

A husband wishing his wife wouldn't harp on him so much? Sounds like a hackneyed gender stereotype (even if the litigation part takes it to a new level). Kind of like the one about the wife who longs for her husband to open up about his feelings more. But a recent study in the *Journal of Family Communication* that examined how married people cope with anger—and its impact on their mortality—suggests that these frustrated spouses may be onto something profound.



'RESENTMENT DISTURBS BODILY SYSTEMS. BLOOD PRESSURE MAY RISE.'

The couples who lived the longest were the ones in which the husband expressed his negative emotions while the wife suppressed hers. (As opposed to spouses who both expressed their anger, or both suppressed it.) "You figure that out," says Ernest Harburg, the lead researcher and a psychology professor emeritus at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, acknowledging the bewildering finding.

What's so fascinating about the result is that it goes against the hallmark of marital advice: everyone should communicate constantly. There is growing evidence that too much talk can be bad. "Niagara Falls verbiage descending on a person causes them to shut their ears," says Harburg, offering one explanation. "It doesn't help communication to overtalk." Last year, the book *How to Improve Your Marriage Without Talking About It* was bestowed the ultimate credibility booster: a 1,500-word feature in O magazine. Co-author Steven Stosny said that despite women's innate tendency to express their anxiety, when it comes to talking, "the truth is, more often than not, it makes things worse."

If you don't accept that females do most of the complaining, consider a 2002 study in the *Journal of Pragmatics*, which found that two-thirds of the nagging that occurs within a family is carried out by women. Of 70 examples of it, 43 per cent were about chores and errands while 26 per cent were about failing to do something or not completing a task. (Of course, this may be because women do a lot more of the housework than men, stats show.) The few complaints that came from males had nothing to do with domesticity—one husband, for example, nagged his wife not to slam the car door. "We do know that women tend to express emotions more than men," says Ted Robles, a psychology professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. "That can play out in the demand-withdraw pattern."

It's also known as the flight or fight response, and every relationship expert brings it up when talking about spousal communication. You know the model: wife expresses concern, husband ignores wife, wife feels dismissed and reiterates concern, husband feels threatened and further retreats, and on it goes until there's an explosive encounter. This pattern predicts a decline in marital satisfaction, says Robles, and women in these situations show higher levels of stress hormones than men. "So when a husband doesn't participate in arguments, it is damaging for a woman's health," he explains.

Stonewalling husbands come into psychologist Barry Rich's counselling office in Richmond Hill, Ont., regularly. "The men I've met don't want to come to therapy," he says. "They're not as expressive as their wives. They think it's a girlie thing to do." The danger of not talking about negative feelings over a long period of time can be summed up in one ugly word: resentment. Not only does it fuel bad vibes between spouses, it harms their well-being. "Resentment is a condition we can [see] disturbs bodily systems," says Harburg. "Blood pressure may rise, ulcers may occur [as well as] respiratory issues."

Given all this, the most apt marriage advice may be that where there's a stonewaller and a nagger, the best solution is for both partners to adopt some of the behaviour that's driving them nuts. A meet-in-the-middle approach. "Couples that are mismatched in the sense that one is expressive and one is suppressive may be relatively satisfied," says Robles, because they complement each other. That's the ideal scenario, anyway. First spouses need to recognize their contribution to their conflicts. And then what—how does a wife or husband recover? That happens when a person feels vindicated, usually "through an apology," Harburg says.

Otherwise, couples may be better off apart. A recent study in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* concluded that spouses with low marital satisfaction were less healthy than single people. The consequences of staying unhappily married have never been so dire. Just ask the man from Parma. Or better yet, his wife. M



GERMANY: KNIT YOUR WAY TO PAROLE

A judge in the town of Rockenhausen has matched the sentence to the criminal. Heidi Kohl, 59, was found guilty of slashing car tires. She claimed that there were so many parked cars she couldn't find a safe place to cross the road. With no money to pay a fine, Kohl accepted the sentence. She must knit sweaters for owners of all the cars she vandalized. "When she's knitted the sweaters, the matter will be over for us," said a prosecution spokesman.

PETER MINGES

FOR A SELECT FEW, GIFT-GIVING HAS ITS ISSUES

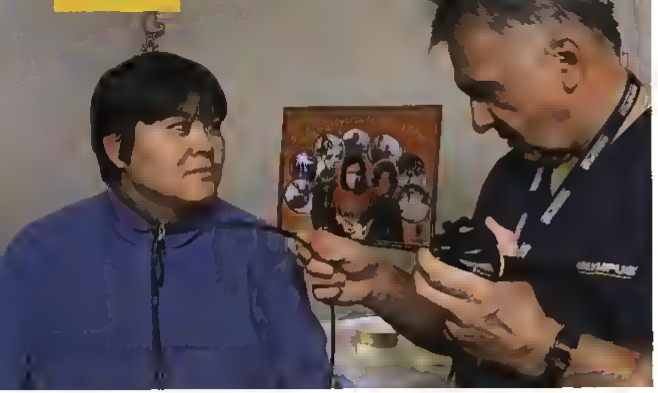


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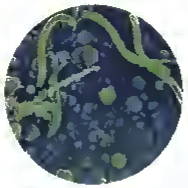
ERADICATING A BAD BACTERIA

Will we be better off when H. pylori is gone for good?

BY KATE LUNAU • The town motto of Aklavik, an Arctic hamlet huddled at the Mackenzie River Delta in the Northwest Territories, is "Never Say Die." So when the close-knit community of 600 noticed an alarming trend—a high number of people were getting sick with stomach cancer—they decided to act. "In the past, we hardly ever buried anyone except elders. The graveyard wasn't touched for so long," says child care worker Annie Buckle, 54. Now, "there's a new gravesite. You'd be surprised by the dates [on the headstones]." Buckle says she lost her mother to stomach cancer last year.

The culprit, residents believed, was a common bacteria, *Helicobacter pylori*. The spiral-shaped bug, which lives in the human stomach or intestine, is a major cause of gastric cancer and peptic ulcer disease. (Gastric cancer is the second most common cancer among Inuit men, but ranks 10th overall for Canadian men.) So, the community invited a medical team from Edmonton and Yellowknife to investigate. In February, 27 doctors, nurses and researchers descended on Aklavik, surveying 314 people and endoscoping 193. Among 255 people given a breath test for *H pylori*, 57 per cent came back positive. Buckle was one of them: she took a preventative 10-day course of antibiotics to rid herself of the bug. All who tested positive, symptomatic or not, will be offered treatment.

Humans have lived with *H. pylori* for over 50,000 years. Now, across the developed world, it's rapidly going extinct. A century ago, it's thought that nearly everyone had it in their stomachs; today, thanks to clean water, better hygiene and antibiotics, just five per cent of people born in the 1990s do, according to one U.S. study. (The bacteria, which is transmitted orally or fecally, is more prevalent in rural and developing areas.) The benefits of eradicating *H. pylori* have been great. "Ulcer disease is going away; stomach cancer is going away," says Dr. Martin Blaser, chair of the Department of Medicine at the New York University School of Medicine, whose work was instrumental in linking *H. pylori* to gastric cancer. But as those ailments disappear, "new diseases are rising," he adds.



KIDS WITH H. PYLORI ARE 59 PER CENT LESS LIKELY TO HAVE ASTHMA

And the loss of *H. pylori* could be partly to blame. A growing body of research suggests the bug might not just cause ulcers and cancer—it could actually prevent some diseases, too. As *H. pylori* is wiped out, a host of health problems are on the rise: more than half of the population in Canada is now overweight or obese. Over 15 per cent of kids aged four to 11 suffer from childhood asthma. Six million Canadians have gastroesophageal reflux disease (better known as GERD), when stomach contents splash up into the esophagus. Could the much-maligned bacteria actually protect against these conditions? Blaser believes it might. "If the world is more complicated than what was originally proposed, then so be it," he says. "The question is, what's the truth?"

Once rare, esophageal adenocarcinoma (a cancer of the esophagus) is now the fastest-increasing cancer in several developed countries, including the U.S. and the U.K., Blaser notes. In both places, it now constitutes roughly half of all esophageal cancer cases. Yet people who carry a certain strain of *H pylori* are almost half as likely to get this disease, according to a recent review of medical literature (published in the October issue of *Cancer Prevention Research*).

Co-author Dr. Farin Kamangar, a research fellow at the U.S. National Cancer Institute, says *H. pylori* likely reduces the risk of esophageal adenocarcinoma in two ways. The bacteria "makes your stomach produce less acid," he explains. (Acid reflux is a risk factor for the disease.) It may also impact weight gain, another important contributor. The human stomach produces two hormones that regulate appetite: ghrelin (which tells us to eat) and leptin (which tells us not to). *H. pylori* seems to lower ghrelin production in the stomach, Kamangar says. Considering the current obesity crisis, this has startling implications. "A generation of children are growing up without *Helicobacter* in their stomachs to regulate these two hormones," says Blaser.

Like obesity and acid reflux, asthma was virtually unknown a century ago—and today, it's common across the developed world. A recent study concluded that kids aged three to 13 who carry *H. pylori* are almost 59 per cent less likely to have asthma. What's more, teens and kids were 40 per cent less likely to have hay fever and associated allergies, like eczema and rashes. Blaser, who co-authored the study, believes *H. pylori* could affect how a child's immune system develops. An early encounter with *Helicobacter*, he suggests, could help their bodies learn to better respond to allergens, curbing the inflammation that triggers an asthma attack.

TERRY HALIFAX/CAPITAL HEALTH; DR. GARY D. GAUGLER/NEWSCOM

californie almonds

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CALIFORNIA almonds are in!
www.AlmondsAreIn.com

Blaser's work follows on the heels of a study by University of Manitoba researcher Anita Kozyrskyj, published last year, showing that babies who received one or two courses of antibiotics before age one were 20 per cent more likely to have asthma by age seven. "With antibiotics, we're changing our normal microbiota, including *Helicobacter*," Blaser says. "Mothers, when you give antibiotics to your kid with an ear infection, there may be hidden, long-term costs."

Will we be better off when *H. pylori* is gone for good? Dr. Karen Goodman, associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Alberta, is overseeing the Aklavik *H. Pylori* project. "It's still quite a minority view that *H. pylori* infection might have some benefits," she says. "The standard is, if the infection is detected in someone, that person should be offered treatment." And the gains created by knocking out the bacteria can't be taken for granted. "We used to see a duodenal ulcer every day," says Canadian Digestive Health Foundation president Dr. Richard Fedorak, a professor of medicine at the University of Alberta, who's also involved in the Aklavik project. "Now, we don't see one for a week."

Reached over the phone in Canberra, Nobel laureate Dr. Barry Marshall—one of the two Australian researchers who discovered *H. pylori* over 20 years ago and its role in gastritis and peptic ulcer disease—is even more explicit. "I've treated thousands of people with *Helicobacter*, and I don't have any who've come back and said, 'Dr. Marshall, I want it back please, I was healthier before,'" says Marshall (who famously drank the so-called "ulcer bugs" in a cocktail, to prove they caused ulcers). "They could do that," he adds, "because I have all the strains in my refrigerator."

Yet Blaser says we shouldn't dismiss the notion that some strains of *H. pylori* could be beneficial. "If someone has an ulcer, no question that *Helicobacter* should be removed," he says. As for getting rid of it altogether, "I think we don't know enough. We need to learn more."

After researching the bacteria for over two decades, Blaser has a new theory. "In biology, we talk about the idea of symbiosis, where two life forms help each other," he says. Blaser believes that *Helicobacter* has become perfectly symbiotic with humans. "It helps us when we're young, and kills us when we're old," he says. "That's bad for the individual, but it's good for the species." The trick, Blaser says, is learning how to *beat* nature. He can envision a future where, once *H. pylori* is better understood, babies might be colonized with good strains of the bacteria to reap its protective benefits.

Barry Marshall's opinion is different. "Maybe *H. pylori* did have a useful purpose in ancient history, because if you didn't live very long, you could never develop stomach cancer," he says. "But nowadays, it's doing more harm than good." When asked about the potential that this bacteria could have some positive health effects, he says: "Smoking helps prevent ulcerative colitis. The question is, if you get colitis, do you start smoking?" If *H. pylori* disappeared altogether, Marshall says, "I think we'd be healthier."

MARSHALL DISCOVERED ITS ROLE IN PEPTIC ULCERS AND GASTRITIS. HE DOESN'T BUY THE NEW RESEARCH.



TEJEDERAS/NEWSCOM

Back in Aklavik, those who tested positive for *H. pylori* will receive treatment in November. Researchers plan to follow up in January, and again in 2010. Ridding the community of the bacteria will be a challenge, Karen Goodman admits. "People can be resistant to treatment, and there are huge strain variations," she says. Beyond that, there's always the possibility of reinfection. Yet community education is another important goal of the program, which has already been hailed a success. The town of Old Crow in the Yukon has approached Goodman about taking it there next.

Over 20 years after *H. pylori* was discovered, the notion that stomach cancer and peptic ulcer disease—two conditions that have afflicted millions worldwide—can be fended off with an antibiotic treatment, is still a medical mind-blower. It's provided hope to countless people. Buckle included. Before the team's visit, "I could feel that people were scared," she says. Afterwards, "there was a lift in the community. It made us feel like we're not in a bad picture anymore." M

THE TAO OF POOP

The meaning of the ultimate euphemism is anything but simple

BY BRIAN BETHUNE • For a process that's as natural as breathing, eliminating human waste, not to mention the stuff itself, is hard to talk about. Those other sensitive topics, sex and death, have their endless array of unhelpful euphemisms too, but they also have neutral words—namely, "sex" and "death"—that adults can use to discuss them without being reduced to the mindset of giggling eight year-olds. But not this one: the unmentionable gave way over the centuries to banal formalities—ordure, stool, feces and the like—that all seem both faintly ridiculous and coloured by enough of an ick factor them selves that feces, for one, has spawned 34 euphemisms of its own, according to noted linguist Steven Pinker. No wonder the boy hero of Dr. Seuss's *It's Grinch Night* politely asks permission "to go to the euphemism."

Since social mores keep us from talking about it—although experts from physicians to sanitation engineers dearly wish we would—traditional elimination behaviour is glacially slow to change. Which is why, as Rose George's compelling new book, *The Big Necessity: The Unmentionable World of Human Waste and Why It Matters*, points out, so many in the field are fascinated by Japan's postwar toilet revolution.

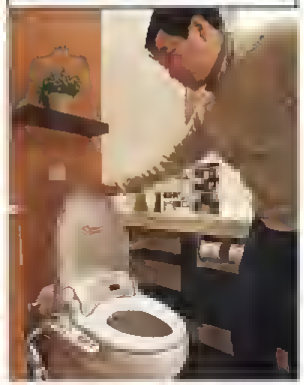
For posterior cleaning purposes, the world, George notes, is essentially divided between wet cultures and dry. The washing side swears by its superior results, and quite rightly, according to most people who have examined the issue. One of the heroes of sanitation research is the intrepid J. A. Cameron, a British physician who surveyed the underwear of 940 Oxfordshire men in 1964. He was, to considerably understate the matter, appalled at what he found. The paper side, in fact, doesn't claim wiping works better than washing (since it doesn't), it merely finds something repulsive in applying water to bottoms, at least outside of a bathtub.

In 1945 Japan was still a pit latrine and paper culture. Now it makes the most advanced toilets in the world: devices that check blood pressure, play music, suck smelly ions from the atmosphere, heat their seats and put them back down (an application known as the "marriage saver"), wash and dry posteriors with an in toilet nozzle that sprays water and warm air. Turning these devices into the norm in Japanese homes took time—and a 1980s ad campaign that found the Holy Grail, a way of talking to people about personal sanitation that actually connected with them.



GIACOMO PIROZZI/PANOS; YOSHIKAZU TSUNO/GETTY

MAKING THE SINGING TOILET STANDARD IN JAPAN TOOK A CLEVER '80S AD CAMPAIGN



SANITATION is a huge problem in Africa, but we're not as good at it as we think either

The TV ads for the TOTO plumbing company starred an attractive young woman, singer Jun Togawa, described to George as a Japanese Cyndi Lauper. Togawa, endearingly offbeat in her hair and clothes—traditional wooden shoes, flouncy dress, hair in buns—would stand on a fake buttock reading aloud a letter purportedly from her rear end that said "even bottoms have feelings." The ads appealed to viewers and the campaign was a huge success, making TOTO's Washlet the dominant toilet in Japan.

But it's a dud in North America. All our toilet ingenuity has gone into "improved flow technology," thereby perfecting the removal of waste from our homes even as we've acted to block its removal from our bodies. The newest toilets now reach 66 inches in height, better for aging boomer knees, but worse for aging boomer colons: squatting frees the colon and aids defecation, sitting squeezes it shut and impedes removal. Many experts link our toilets to our rising rates of constipation, hemorrhoids and colon cancer.

It would all be comic, were it not for the fact human waste is human health's single greatest hazard. A single gram can contain 10 million viruses, one million bacteria, and 100 worm eggs. That's why water-borne diseases—another euphemism: it's not the water that's the problem—cause 80 per cent of the world's sicknesses and kill one child every 15 seconds. Nor is human waste just a problem in faraway lands. In the developed world public sanitation is the biggest medical advance of the past two centuries, more important than antibiotics. Flush toilets and sewers, in some experts' opinions, have added 20 years to the Western life span.

But we haven't solved the problem so much as whisked it out of sight: 90 per cent of sewage still ends up untreated in oceans, lakes and rivers—often in the same sources that provide drinking water. Western sanitation, George writes, is based on "pipes and presumption." The presumption has never really stood up to scrutiny—consider the 1,700 boil-water advisories current in Canada—and now the pipes are crumbling too, especially in the oldest sewer systems. With toilets that impede defecation and flush and forget sewage systems, it's clear the Western world could use a Japanese-style, behaviour-changing ad campaign. Maybe Cyndi Lauper is available. M

WAY OUT THERE

SAVE WATER AND TIME: SHOWER WITH YOUR SUIT

Australian Wool Innovation Ltd. has created "MerinoFresh," a wool business suit you can clean overnight by wearing it in the shower. If you feel silly, you can also hang it on a hanger in the shower. Whatever approach, its inventors say that exposing the suit to 40°C water removes smog, smoke, dirt and water-based stains. The garment then dries overnight. The company says it has 170,000 orders for the shower suit from Japan.

'MY HOUSE IS GONE, THINGS I BROUGHT BACK FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. BUT WE HAVE THIS TOOTH.'—TEXAS BEACH HOUSE OWNER DORHY SISK ON A SURPRISE FIND AFTER HURRICANE IKE

TARA SERGERIE
STAMPEDE ROYALTY IS HEREDITARY

Here's a princess not afraid to get her hands dirty. Newly crowned Calgary Stampede Princess **Tara Sergerie**, following in the footsteps of her mother, **Cindy Sergerie**, the 1976 Stampede Queen, has been chosen to serve as part of the Royal Trio, acting as ambassadors for the rodeo. Sergerie, 23, has worked as a horse wrangler and stunt double on the CBC series *Heartland*. Rounding out the trio is Stampede Queen **Kerri Williamson**, 23, and Princess **Kateri Cowley**, 22. Williamson and Sergerie are studying nursing at Mount Royal College in Calgary, and Cowley, who lives in Kananaskis, Alta., also did work on *Heartland* and stayed with Sergerie at her Okotoks, Alta., home during the competition. The trio were crowned in front of **Patsy Rodgers**, 82, the first ever Stampede Queen in 1946, who returned to kick off this year's Stampede as parade marshal.

SAMANTHA CAMERON
'GLAM SAM' AND TRICKY

She may be the daughter of a baronet whose wealth exceeds $60 million, but **Samantha Cameron** is widely viewed as the political wife British women most relate to. The down-to-earth 37-year-old, who has a dolphin tattooed on her ankle and spent her college years immersed in Bristol's rock art scene, has been deployed to reel in crucial female voters for her husband, Conservative Leader **David Cameron**. But "Glam Sam" may want to shore up her street cred. Her claim that she used to hang out with well-known British rapper **Tricky** was denied by the DJ himself. The so-called "Sam Factor," however, is about more than the company she keeps. She has earned the respect of working moms for juggling her career and raising three kids, including a severely disabled son. She spent some of her earnings on redoing her basement for him. In any event, it may not be too late to introduce herself to her would-be pal. Says Tricky, "I'd love to meet her."

ANIL AMBANI
FAMILY FEUD COULD RUN INTO BILLIONS

He's the sixth-richest man in the world and he's just inked a US$1.5-billion deal with director **Steven Spielberg** that will see the Hollywood mogul produce up to 35 films in the next five years. But it's **Anil Ambani**'s relationship with his elder brother **Mukesh**, No. 5 on the *Forbes* list of billionaires, that has grabbed headlines. Late last month, the Indian oligarch filed a $2.5-billion lawsuit alleging that Mukesh damaged his reputation during an interview by suggesting that Anil had spies collecting "data about the vulnerabilities of the powerful." It's the latest in an increasingly bitter feud between the brothers, who control around five per cent of India's GDP. Though the brothers still work in the same office tower, they apparently use separate elevators. It seems that nothing can stop the sibling rivalry. Recently, the Indian government intervened when their bickering threatened a crucial gas supply. Things have gotten so bitter that Mukesh moved out of the family's luxurious compound and is building a 27-storey home worth an estimated $1 billion. Now everyone is waiting to see Anil's next move.

CHUWIT KAMOLVISIT
'MR. ANGRY' FAILS TO SWAY THAI VOTERS

The election campaign for the Bangkok mayoralty was nothing if not dangerously colourful. One candidate lost her campaign manager after he drowned in a canal demonstrating the water's unsuitability for drinking. But of the 16 candidates, no one presented a more arresting presence than **Chuwit Kamolvisit**. He called himself Mr. Angry for his quick temper—he punched out a TV reporter on air for asking "impolite questions." Chuwit vowed to clean up corruption in the graft-ridden metropolis. It was hard to take that seriously, since Chuwit used to boast he paid US$3.5 million a year in bribes to the police while he was Bangkok's massage-parlour king. "Massage parlours are dirty, but politics are dirtier," he said. But volcanic fury failed to punt Chuwit into office. **Apirak Kosayodhin**, an administrator who made little improvement in the sprawling capital during a previous stint in office, swept the polls Monday in a landslide. He clearly has a quality that a country known for social equilibrium prizes: holding one's temper.

LORRAINE HJALTE/CALGARY HERALD. AP. AFP. CP. NEWSCOM. AFP

PATRICK LANE
AN OLD STORYTELLER MAKES A DEBUT

At 69, he's an acclaimed poet and author of the brilliant 2004 memoir *There is a Season*. Now, **Patrick Lane** has become one of the oldest debut novelists ever to make the Giller prize long list with *Red Dog, Red Dog*. The reason, the B.C. writer explains, is prosaic: he liked to read novels but found writing them maddeningly slow. "Oh, I used to be hard on novelists," he laughs. "I would call up **Guy Vanderhaeghe** and ask him how many pages he had written that day." Lane used to start novels and then abandon them for the faster satisfaction of another poem. He did manage to get to the end of one in the 1970s, "about a boy raised by animals after the Apocalypse." A publisher bought the rights, but Lane was too bored to polish it. So why now? Mostly because time was running out. "I wanted to prove I could do it." Consider it proven. *Red Dog, Red Dog*—a compassionate novel of extreme violence, family and loyalty—is making up for Lane's lost time, generating more buzz than any other novel this fall.

ALEXANDRA KOSTENIUK
QUEEN OF MIND GAMES

At the inaugural World Mind Sports Games in Beijing, a 15-day post-Olympic jamboree of mental prowess featuring nearly 4,000 participants from 143 countries, Russia's **Alexandra Kosteniuk** captured gold in blitz chess. Kosteniuk, 24, beat former world champion chess master **Antoaneta Stefanova**, 29, of Bulgaria two to one in a thrilling come-from-behind final match. Kosteniuk was so good at the Mind Games—which also include sports such as go, checkers and bridge—that she won every game she competed in. A grand master since 2004, Kosteniuk has been playing internationally since the age of 17. But she's no square. Her second-favourite love is modelling, and she hosts a popular podcast show called "Chess is Cool" to inform fans about her life and upcoming chess events. "Beauty and intelligence can go together," says Kosteniuk. Who can argue with that?

JIM WESTGATE
A MAMMOTH FIND IN A HURRICANE'S WAKE

When academic **Dorothy Sisk** returned to her beach home in Texas after the devastation of hurricane Ike, she picked through the wreckage for her belongings with a friend and colleague at Lamar University, paleontologist **Jim Westgate**. While searching through the murky sand she found one of her dinner plates, a pair of scissors and a favourite Crock-Pot. But among the jetsam that the storm turned up was something Westgate immediately recognized: a molar from a mammoth. Despite years of examining the local terrain, he had never made a discovery of this nature: a 15-cm tooth covered with grooves. "I've been here 20 years, and I've never found a mammoth's tooth," Westgate says. But the discovery is bittersweet for Sisk. "My house is gone—all my books, two or three bookcases in every room, things I brought back from all over the world. But we have this tooth." Sisk says she won't go back to her beach home. The town of Caplen has been virtually erased from the earth.

MOSES WETANGULA
FACING DOWN 'SHAMELESS BLACKMAIL'

As his government struggles to regain some stability, Kenyan Foreign Minister **Moses Wetangula** wants no meddling from Western embassies. He accused diplomats of applying "shameless blackmail on constitutional office holders," referring to his country's electoral commissioners, who he says have been threatened by the United States with a visa ban after they refused to resign. The resignations were recommended by an independent inquiry that reviewed Kenya's catastrophic December 2007 election, when highly suspicious poll results led to rampant rioting that left 1,500 dead and 600,000 homeless. "The government will not tolerate what seems now to be a pattern of activism being practised in Nairobi by a few ambassadors under the guise of conducting their normal diplomatic engagements," Wetangula said. Kenya, however, will likely not be able to avoid the West's influence for long. Prime Minister **Raila Odinga** expects that the economy, which has benefited from the commodities boom, will be hit hard by the global financial crisis.

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY UNAART.COM

film

BOND'S REVENGE

After making the skeptics eat their words, the best actor ever to play 007 is back, and this time it's personal

BY BRIAN D. JOHNSON

Daniel Craig is on the line from London. He's being cagey, as if there's something unmanly about opening up to the media. James Bond would never sit still for it. When I reassure him I'm more curious about Bond's private life than his own, he expresses relief. Frankly, I'm relieved we're not talking face to face. Two years ago in New York, when he sat down with a group of journalists to promote his Bond debut in *Casino Royale*, it was unnerving just to be in the same room. He had a brusque manner and ice-blue eyes that looked like they could bore a hole through your skull. But he was feeling especially prickly then, after skeptics had derided the idea of a blond Bond and dubbed him Mr. Potato Head.

Craig got even, and then some. Now as he anticipates the Nov. 14 launch of the oddly titled *Quantum of Solace*, the 22nd movie in cinema's most successful franchise, he has no one to live up to but himself. *Casino Royale* became the most lucrative Bond movie of all, earning $600 million worldwide. Craig was widely hailed as the best actor ever to have tackled the role. And, blondness notwithstanding, he incarnated the dark menace of the character novelist Ian Fleming created 55 years ago. The debonair stylings of Roger Moore and Pierce Brosnan had reduced 007 to a male model in a pageant of gadgets, gizmos and campy innuendo. Craig repatriated Bond's masculinity with visceral power, recasting him as a sophisticated thug. A Bond with balls.

James Bond is the most enduring male sex symbol in the history of movies, and as he gets caught in the riptides of masculine fashion, every era gets the Bond it deserves. In an age that fetishizes hardened physiques and retro styles of macho chic, Craig has created a rugged, messed-up, hyper-masculine 007 who is knotted with repressed rage and treats women as an alien species. "I wish I could say it was my idea," says Craig, "but Fleming's Bond is full of self-doubt and his relationship with women is *very* strange."

Does Bond even *like* women? I ask Craig.

"I think he adores them," he says. "If you're asking, does he like the touch of a woman's skin, yes, he does. In handfuls. But the way I perceive it, he has had a male life for a long time, surrounded by men because he'd been fighting for so long ... I think he has a deep respect for M, and it's fantastic that Judi [Dench] plays M because that relationship is the key to the whole thing."

Could M be a kind of Bond girl?

"She is *the* Bond girl," says Craig, "because she's the one person that he probably respects and loves more than anybody."

Bond's matriarchal boss has, in fact, been given a larger role in *Quantum of Solace*, which is a direct sequel to *Casino Royale* (again co-written by Canadian Paul Haggis). And the movie's theme, Craig explains, is "loyalty—finding out where your true loyalties lie."

So if Bond loves M, and M represents the Queen and Mother England, maybe Bond is just another English schoolboy trying to live up to an imperious mum and an absent dad. Which brings us right back to Ian Fleming, an upper-class Eton boy who lost his father in the Great War at 8 (Winston Churchill wrote his obituary), who fled to Jamaica and thrived on drink, adultery and rough sex, who died at 56 not long after attending his mother's funeral against the advice of doctors who said he was too ill to go.

For an English-bred boy hitting his teens in the early '60s, as I was, Bond was the first grown-up icon of aggressively male fantasy—an early commando in the sexual revolution. Until then, we'd doted on men in capes, tights, masks, leather chaps, and coonskin caps—a carnival of superhero drag that included Superman, Batman, Roy Rogers, Davy Crockett, Zorro and the Lone Ranger. Then along came this guy who wore a suit. His idea of camouflage was to throw on a tuxedo. He was a secret agent without a secret identity.

"That's the thing about Bond," says Craig. "He just walks into a room and goes, 'I'm Bond, James Bond.' He's supposed to be undercover, but it's like he fights against that every time. He walks straight in and declares himself, and that's his element of surprise because everybody turns around and goes, 'Where the f–k ... where did you come from?' He's the perfect anti-spy."

There was a time when Bond seemed cool, contemporary, even plausible—a brief shining moment that neatly coincided with John F. Kennedy's presidency (1961-63). As a glamorous, womanizing naval commander who became a Cold War gladiator, JFK seemed akin to Bond. Kennedy, in fact, made him famous by confessing he was a big Fleming fan, and as he played poker with Russia in the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Dr. No*'s release was delayed because of the resonance it, too, involved a nuclear showdown on a Caribbean island with the world's fate in the balance.

But within a year of Connery's second 007 outing, *From Russia With Love* (1963), Bond had been eclipsed by a British invasion of a

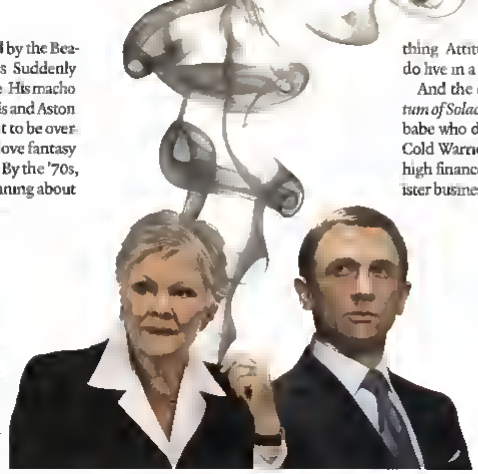
different kind, led by the Beatles and the Stones. Suddenly 007 seemed square. His macho domain of martinis and Aston Martins was about to be overtaken by a younger wave of free-love fantasy fuelled by drugs and androgyny. By the '70s, the idea of a misogynist spy swanning about the Third World in decadent luxury seemed comically absurd.

In the '80s and '90s, the 007 franchise stayed alive by spoofing its own clichés. Bond's potency waned with the affectation of Roger Moore and the smooth politesse of Pierce Brosnan; neither seemed capable of cruelty. Meanwhile, the Bond girl grew up to become a castrating sexpot retrofitted with feminist irony—from the dominatrix assassin played by Grace Jones in *A View to a Kill* to *GoldenEye*'s Xenia Onatopp (Famke Janssen), who crushed men to death with her thighs. But Bond has always been allergic to femininity. In Fleming's novels, his typical turn-on was a distant beauty with a cruel mouth, and if "she drove like a man" nothing could be hotter. I.e., a distaff 007.

Dragging a relic of colonial privilege into the 21st century, Craig has both modernized Bond and restored him. And he has a clear affinity for the actor who created the role, and gave him the insouciant edge of a class-conscious imposter. "Fleming wrote an upper-class character, one who went to Eton," says Craig. "Then [producer] Cubby Broccoli cast Sean Connery, who is working-class, who is from Scotland, *who's not even English*, and made him accessible, a hero for the people. Connery wore suits like nobody else—with disdain. He just put them on and it was like, 'Yes, it looks great. What do I care?' "

Of course, the suit in *Casino Royale* that everyone talked about was a blue swimsuit that revealed Craig to be the most buff Bond ever to strip off his shirt. And he's sick of hearing about it. "I'm always going to shy away from a conversation about me walking out of the sea with a pair of trunks on," he says, "but mainly because it was a total accident. It was meant to be a swimming shot, the water was so shallow I had to stand up." Whether by design or accident, it looked like an homage to Ursula Andress, the first Bond girl, stepping from the sea in a white bikini as Honey Ryder in *Dr No* (1962). Now Bond sploitation had come full circle: in *Casino Royale*, the hottest sex object was not another Bond girl, but Bond himself.

Craig has a thespian rational for striking a beefcake pose. "I wanted him to look like he'd just stepped out of the armed forces. That's why I bulked up. If I'm going to play him running around, jumping, throwing himself off buildings and through windows, if he takes his shirt off, he has to look like he can do it." He did not get as pumped for *Quantum of Solace*, he adds. "This movie's a little different, although I'm actually fitter than I was in the last one, because I wanted to do more. I don't strip down to my underpants... but there's a little bit of flesh."



'M is the one person that Bond probably respects and loves more than anybody,' says Craig

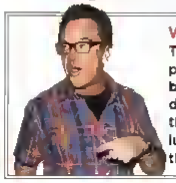
Craig is the most athletic Bond we've seen, but the bar has been raised since Connery idled through his later films with a marshmallow belly and a rug of chest hair. "You read Fleming," says Craig, "and it's like Bond gets up in the morning, has six scrambled eggs made with cream, eight rashers of bacon, four cups of espresso, does 20 press-ups and smokes 20 cigarettes, then has a shot of some thing. Attitudes have changed. We probably do live in a world of body-fascism now."

And the enemies have changed. In *Quantum of Solace*, back to avenge the death of the babe who died in *Casino Royale*, our former Cold Warrior is now battling conspiracies of high finance—he's pitted against another sinister businessman (Mathieu Amalric)—which is only fitting in a world on the brink of economic catastrophe. As our wealth evaporates, perhaps Bond offers the ultimate bailout, a fantasy of bottomless opulence. "You update these things at your peril," says Craig, adding that the new movie derives its style directly from Fleming and is rife with homages to early Bond movies.

Although *Quantum of Solace* is an original script, its title comes from a Fleming short story that's unlike anything else he wrote—more in the vein of Somerset Maugham. Trapped on a chintz sofa with the Bahamian governor, Bond says, "If I ever married, I would marry an air hostess," which prompts the governor to tell the story of a stewardess who found a devoted husband then pushed his trust to the limit with her infidelities—a "quantum of solace" being the modicum of comfort required to sustain a relationship.

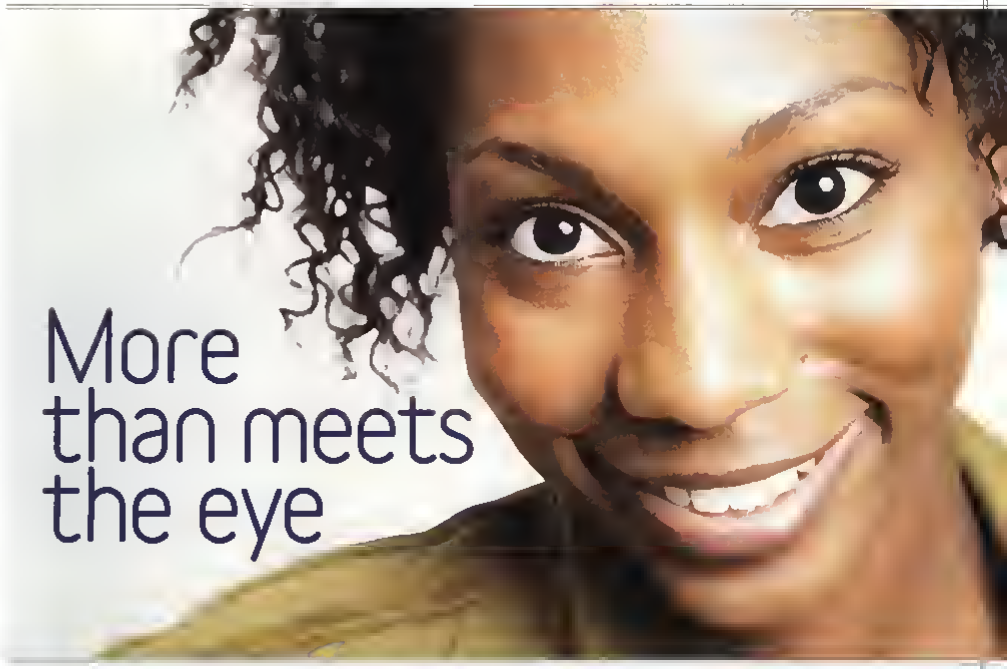
Bond "was never comfortable sitting deep in soft cushions," writes Fleming. "He felt foolish sitting with an elderly bachelor on his bed of rose chintz.... There was something clubbable, intimate, even rather feminine about the scene and none of these atmospheres was appropriate." But after that allergic flush of homophobia, by the end Bond is humbled, realizing that "the violent dramatics of his own life seemed very hollow" next to the "real violence" of everyday life.

As I push Craig to psychoanalyze Bond on our own chintz couch of forced intimacy, he seems uneasy. "I feel I'm writing a thesis here," he finally says, exasperated. "Bond goes after the bad guys and always did. I don't think there's anything deeper than that." Although Craig has reinvented Bond by diving into the psychological depths of Fleming's alter ego, he's not about to let the character get under his own skin. "When I'm filming," he says, "it envelops me. But as soon as I finish, I'm outta there." Just like Bond. M



WE'RE STALKING... TOM ARNOLD

The former spouse of Roseanne Barr has battled the bottle in the past, but now he's been in rehab to get another monkey off his back: Diet Coke. And Nicorettes: he plows through 40 pieces a day and hauls back up to 30 Cokes. "I have had no caffeine, nicotine, sugar or gluten for 2½ weeks. The first three days I was hallucinating. It was way worse than rehab for drugs. In drug rehab they give you a little something to take the edge off."



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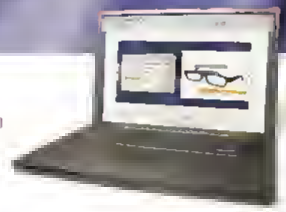
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My Lens Options:
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My Frames:
Eyeglassguide.ca got me started – my eyecare professional did the rest

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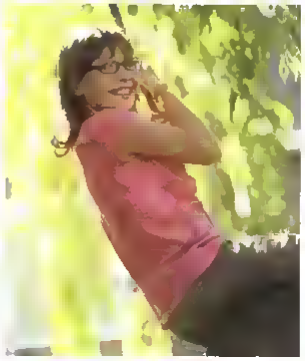
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Choices are not simple when it comes to optical products, and the repercussions of making the wrong choice can be expensive and even unsafe Eyeglasses and contact lenses are not standalone products Research and development have brought increasing choice to consumers, but with increasing choice comes increasing complexity The good news is that Opticians can demystify the process

How can opticians advise you? Atkinson says, "When you work with your Registered Optician you engage in a collaboration that in the end matches your specific needs to the products that will give you the best vision and protection" The interface you have with your Optician establishes a continuing connection with a professional who has the commitment to support your choices and the skill to resolve your difficulties



When your prescription changes

One of the biggest challenges to both Optician and patient comes when there is a change in prescription We all assume that it is our eyes that see but in fact our eyes are only a transmitter of information to our brains The brain interprets this information to make decisions, like when to make a left turn or when to put on the brakes A new prescription can create changes in perception to which you will have to adapt At first you may get a 'swimming' sensation when you move your head quickly You may feel like you are standing on a hill or conversely, standing in a ditch These are all sensations that are the result of the new reality created by your new prescription It is the job of your Optician to guide you through this experience There may be lens or frame products that will minimize this effect You should expect that advice from your Optician

Marc Sylvestre managing owner of Special Eyes Optical in Winnipeg, points out that, sometimes changes in vision call for new behaviours rather than a new prescription "Dim lighting typically doesn't bother the young, but older people often hate night driving because their eyes don't let in enough light for them to see properly in the dark," says Sylvestre The best solution? 'Just don't drive at night," he advises

For a better reading environment experiment with different types of bulbs and place your light source behind your shoulder

Meeting the challenge of low vision

Even with the best eyewear and advice vision sometimes deteriorates to a point that some everyday activities become impossible To Robert Auger, managing director of vision aid supplier Optelec Canada low vision means 'the loss of ability to perform day-to-day tasks or activities you were doing before such as driving recognizing people across the street or bowling, even when wearing the most effective corrective lenses for your eyes'

A problem of epidemic proportions

- Statistics Canada s 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) found that 836,000 Canadians identified themselves as having a "seeing disability" Of these, 19,700 were children 14 and under
- A 2007 study commissioned for the National Coalition for Vision Health determined that 278 000 Canadians are visually impaired (defined as a visual acuity between 6/12 and 6/60), and 108 000 Canadians are legally blind (visual acuity less than 6/60)
- An estimated 1 million Canadians have some form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) the leading cause of vision loss in people over 50 That number is expected to more than double by 2031
- The employment rate among working-age people with vision loss is only 25% despite most being highly educated and qualified

The most common cause of low vision is age-related macular degeneration As its name implies the condition becomes more prevalent with age by 75, a third of all people have it to some degree Along with age risk factors for AMD include female gender smoking and pale irises It appears that more light gets through

OPTICIAN AS A CAREER

If you're interested in a career that puts you in the front lines of health-care service, consider becoming an optician. "Being an optician is all about helping people," says Mary Field, Chief Administrative Officer for National Affairs, at the Opticians Association of Canada. "The gratification comes from seeing smiles on the faces of your clients because you've been part of the team that has improved their vision and their appearance. It also comes from building trusting relationships with families that last a lifetime

"Your career is limited only by your energy and ambition", says Field. "Opticians work in a variety of settings including retail dispensaries, laser clinics, in optometric practices and in teaching institutions. Some Opticians participate in research projects" she says. "Each practice environment offers different challenges."

Training for opticians is offered at five colleges in Canada: the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) program is offered in 9 provinces as an online resource, Seneca College and Georgian College provide training in Ontario, Douglas College and BC College of Optics are located in British Columbia. For information on how you can become an Optician contact the Opticians Association of Canada at 1-800-847-3155 or e-mail them at canada@opticians.ca

pale eyes, which can raise the risk of AMD over time,' says Auger. To mitigate this risk, Auger urges consumers to order lenses with UV400 protection. Low vision can also arise – at least temporarily – from cataracts, and a small proportion of cases stem from retinal detachment or diabetic retinopathy.

Low vision poses obvious challenges, like finding substitute transportation if driving is no longer possible. 'People who have trouble recognizing faces and facial expressions may also feel isolated,' Auger points out. "Fortunately, with today's array of reading aids, the great majority doesn't have to give up this pleasure." By the same token, modern technology enables most people with low vision to pursue remunerative and satisfying work. "People never guess that my receptionist is totally blind," he says, adding that a can-do attitude goes a long way. "I once saw a visually impaired senior bowl 220."

Keeping young eyes healthy

When it comes to visual vigilance, there's no such thing as too young. "Eighty-five percent of our learning happens through vision," says Andrea Bedor, managing Optician at Walmart in Belleville, and an executive member of the Ontario Opticians Association. 'Our dream is to get Opticians to do visual screening in all the schools.'

A pilot project with preschoolers in Ontario's York Region is giving shape to Bedor's dream. "We'll be doing basic visual acuity and eye alignment tests," she says. "If results indicate a possible problem, we'll refer the child to an optometrist for a more comprehensive evaluation." Parents of referred children need not panic, though. 'We want to make sure we don't miss any problems, so over-referral is built into the system," Bedor explains.

You might think that children with impaired vision would let their parents know about it, but Bedor says this rarely happens. "If you're born with the problem or if it arises gradually, you assume it's normal," she notes. The fact is, "visual problems get past parents very easily."

When children get appropriate correction, results can be dramatic. 'One child I fitted with glasses was afraid to walk because of the rolls on the rug, which he saw for the very first time," she recalls. Other children "finally understand that trees have thousands of leaves."

Bedor hopes the pilot project evolves into a broader program of visual screening for children of all ages and specialized screening for specific professions. Young or old, she says, "people want the healthiest sight possible, and we Opticians want to help them achieve that." ■





TWO YEARS AGO, Jim Parsons, who plays Sheldon, was virtually unknown except for a brief appearance in the movie *Garden State*

He makes Dr. House seem cuddly

A scientist incapable of social interaction is the reason to watch 'The Big Bang Theory'

BY JAIME J. WEINMAN • Every sitcom needs a breakout character. Usually it's the coolest guy, like Barney on *How I Met Your Mother*. But on *The Big Bang Theory*, whose second season just began on CTV, the most popular character is the one who hates coolness and everything associated with it. Sheldon (Jim Parsons) is a theoretical physicist and a tall, cold-eyed intellectual monster, incapable of showing affection or understanding human interaction. He says that the best part about having friends on *MySpace* is that he never actually has to meet them. He refuses to give his roommate a birthday present until he's told that birthdays are "a non optional social convention." He prefers video games to sex because "sex has not been upgraded to include high-def graphics and enhanced weapons systems." He's so misanthropic and anti-social he makes Dr. House seem cuddly. No wonder the audience loves him.

When *The Big Bang Theory* premiered in 2007, it received mostly poor reviews, and seemed to be another piece of evidence in the case against the multi-camera sitcom. But recently the show has gained a fan following and even some kind words from critics. The main reason for that is Parsons, who two years ago was unknown except for a brief appearance with Zach Braff in the movie *Garden State*. His character has been compared to Niles Crane on *Frasier*: they both look down on people who aren't as smart as they are, and Parsons even looks a bit like David Hyde Pierce. But Niles was basically a conventional person, with a wife, a sex life, and interests outside of his job. Sheldon gets laughs from his lack of any normal emotions at all, and his contempt for anyone who doesn't share his asexuality and workaholism. "Screw him," he says of a young scientist who gets interested in dating, "he was weak." He's Mr. Spock with regular ears, and he's turned a hackneyed premise—a bunch of nerds hanging out with a ditzy sexpot—into a show that becomes unpredictable the moment Parsons walks in.

The question now is whether Parsons's success can elevate *The Big Bang Theory*—whether the whole show can be as funny as Sheldon. The focus of the show was supposed to be Sheldon's roommate Leonard (Johnny Galecki), a good-natured person whom co-creator Bill Prady has described as "the emotional heart of the show." But though Galecki gets top billing, he spends most of his time feeding Parsons straight lines, it's hard to pay attention to him when Sheldon is saying things like "my research will go on uninterrupted and social relationships will continue to baffle and repulse me." Sheldon's proud hatred of normalcy makes Leonard seem like a wimp when he longs for a normal life. Sheldon is such a strong character he makes the nominal hero seem weak by comparison.

On the other hand, there are signs that Parsons's presence is helping some of the other characters on the show as they become funnier through their relationship with Sheldon. The show's female lead is Penny, a sexy waitress played by Kaley Cuoco, she started out as a rather dull, generic blond-bimbo character. But while her scenes with Leonard are standard sitcom stuff, her scenes with Sheldon are fresh and funny. When she tries to share a secret with Sheldon, only to discover that he doesn't understand the concept of keeping secrets, or when she listens to him explain her romantic problems in terms of an obscure scientific theory, she becomes more interesting just because the writers have to come up with offbeat ways for her to deal with Sheldon. When a show has one non-clichéd character, the writing becomes less clichéd too.

Which means that even though *The Big Bang Theory* started as a show about nerds learning to deal with the world, its success now depends on a character who wants the world to go away and leave him alone. Prady told Bob Andelman (*www.mandelman.com*) that the "order and perfection" of scientific research is "a lot more appealing to Sheldon than the messy disorder of human interaction," and that's why he's something new in sitcoms. Instead of looking for love and friendship, Sheldon appeals to everyone who doesn't like dealing with people—and that's all of us, at times. If *The Big Bang Theory* can make Leonard as interesting as Sheldon, it could be a big hit. If it doesn't, it may still be worth watching just to hear Parsons say, "We have to take in nourishment, expel waste, and inhale enough oxygen to keep our cells from dying. Everything else is optional." M



ACCORDING TO TV... THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

"Experts say if a new version of the economic bailout plan is going to pass, significant changes have to be made. For instance, Congress is going to have to remove the section of the plan that says, 'Sweet Jesus, please let this work.' "—Conan O'Brien

'Right now the only winner in this economic mess is vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin, who has all her money in pants." —David Lettermen



SAMPLE QUESTIONS women are asked include, 'Assuming you have a child right now, what's the blow to your social life going to be?'

At what age should I get pregnant?

A mathematical model helps women make a decision 'too important' to trust to feelings

BY JULIA MCKINNELL • Thinking of having a baby but can't decide when or even if? A professor and his Ph D student have come up with a mathematical system to help women make decisions that are "too important to simply go with one's feelings," says Ralph Keeney and his student, Dinah Vernik of Duke University's Fuqua School of Business So Keeney and Vernik have devised a two-hour questionnaire that pushes women to think far into the future and deep into their heart's desire At the moment, "the model helps one woman at a time," Keeney said But soon they hope to have a workable version available to the public, online

Each answer a woman gives is translated into a number Amy Dalton, a 30 year old Canadian now working in Hong Kong, participated in the model and remembers being asked questions like, "Assuming you have a child right now, what's the blow to your social life going to be?" Dalton thought about the question and decided, "I'd reduce it from 70 per cent down to 10 per cent because this kid would eat up all my time and I'd have no life " On the questionnaire, Dalton jotted the number 10 on an X-Y axis When her question naire was done, it looked like algebra, and the data was fed into a computer

Keeney insists "the system isn't complicated because of the math You put in the uncertainties You personalize it The computer does the crunching and it will let you know what's important to you." Every woman, he adds, "knows this is a very difficult problem Somebody has to decide how various factors relate to each other, in this case, how a child has a detrimental impact on a woman's career"

In the case of another young woman, Keeney was surprised that the computer results so thoroughly contradicted what the woman said she wanted Before the questionnaire, the woman said she'd like to have a baby at age 45 The computer said, "Have the baby at 20 " "That's surprising to me," said Keeney, adding, "I have a thought on why that might occur " According to Keeney, the same woman forecast, "When I'm 45, I'm going to be at the top of my career and that's important to me."

"When you're a doctoral student, you can deal with a child pretty well," he said "You almost never have anything due this week. It's due in two years You can work tons but if your child is sick in the morning, you don't have to work that day This means the better time for her to have a baby is much earlier"

Dalton, who's originally from Toronto, said before she answered the questionnaire that she didn't want to have children "I know the research that shows that once a couple has a kid, the happiness in the couple drops off I'm thinking, why would you ever want that?" At the beginning, she says, "it was really difficult I was thinking, 'What the hell, 30? 40? 50?' I'd never thought about it so systematically," she said "To go through and think, 'Okay, when I'm 60, how much would I want a kid? And when I'm 50, how much would I want a kid, and how much would my career actually matter then?' All of these things I previously thought were unquantifiable, now all of a sudden I had to throw out a number"

When the questionnaire results came back, Dalton couldn't believe it "They ran my data and they told me I should start trying to have a baby right now I said, 'You've got to be kidding me! Show me the numbers! This is ridiculous!' " She called her mother in Toronto with the crazy news "My mom got extremely emotional She started telling me how it was to see me as a child enjoying things for the first time, and how that's something I might never get unless I start now"

One of Dalton's professors has had two babies since she's been at Duke and "you know," says Dalton, "I'm in her office and she pulls out this breast pump and I'm like 'What the hell is that?' I feel squeamish just thinking about it " On the other hand, she's intrigued by how her mother went about it "She had me quite young," says Dalton "She's 52 We talk on the phone We have a great social relationship "

Dalton isn't into infants, she says She rates having one at 10 per cent "because it can't do anything but sit there and cry" But she admits she might one day enjoy the company of having adult children just like her mom does In that case, "I would have to start now!" she says So who knows "A year from now I might have my biological clock ticking, then I should redo all the graphs " M



GETTY

MOST IMPROVED SHARON STONE

The actress has emerged from a current child custody hearing with her pride intact, but without her son In a tentative ruling that kept custody of eight-year-old Roan with her ex-husband Phil Bronstein, the judge reported that Stone wanted to give Roan Botox injections in his feet to cure an odour problem Bronstein apparently prescribed socks and foot powder Stone insists she has more sense than to get her child Botox

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ROGERS



JENNIFER COHEN, formerly of Winnipeg, created the NGR (No Gym Required) shoe, which will be available in the new year

PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN HARRIS

So you never have to go to the gym

A new shoe claims to burn up to 50 per cent more calories. Just don't drive with it on.

BY REBECCA ECKLER • It's not often a pair of shoes comes with a "caution while driving or climbing a ladder" warning. Then again, most shoes do not come loaded with weights. Welcome to the new world of exercise, where you don't have to do anything except put on a pair of shoes to fit in a workout. These days, the gym can be found by looking south of your ankle, right on your feet.

Jennifer Cohen, born and bred in Winnipeg, created the line of shoes called NGR, short for No Gym Required. They will be available in the new year, around the same time she releases her first fitness, motivation and health guidebook, *No Gym Required: Unleash Your Inner Rockstar*. "It's the evolution of fitness," explains Cohen. "The '80s was all about aerobics and cardiovascular exercise. The '90s was about the mind and body and yoga." This era, she says, is about the "integrated lifestyle approach." Which means working out while doing everything else you normally do.

Cohen knows about the evolution of fitness. "I've trained people from all walks of life for over a decade," she says. She has also been a spokesperson and activewear model for La Senza, and her photo was featured on billboards across North America for the Nike "Goddess" campaign. Her shoes, she says, will take away every "excuse factor" from fitting in a workout. "Though everyone's lifestyle is so different, it all comes down to the same thing. That is, how to maximize what you do in a minimum amount of time."

Cohen isn't the first to put, or think, feet first. The Masai Barefoot Technology shoe, known as MBT, is slowly working its way onto feet in Canada. The shoes, developed by Swiss engineer Karl Müller, have sold more than a million pairs and promise to improve posture, relieve back pain and exercise legs and butt while you walk. Then there is the FitFlop, created by Bliss spa owner Marcia Kilgore, which promises to help you walk faster and keep the hamstring and calf muscles active longer during steps, reduce joint strain and tone thighs. Cohen says she's the first, however, to come up with something that isn't "ugly." "The other shoes feel like you're wearing a boat on your feet."

Cohen and I meet up in Toronto where she lives part time (she spends most of her time in Los Angeles). The shoes she hands me look like a very hip pair of cross-trainers. "Everyone is shocked when I first show them because they are so aesthetically pleasing." She's right. The shocks on the bottom are a funky shade of green. She places the weights, which are shaped like insoles, in each shoe. (You can take them out and wear the shoes without the weights as well.)

It's a strange feeling to lift a pair of shoes that feel so heavy, and an even stranger feeling to walk in them. Within five minutes I can feel my glute muscles working. Maybe I'm not quite sure if it's because I'm paying more attention, but I'm not sure I care either. This is one product I hope works. "It will tone the lower body, back and burn up to 50 per cent more calories," she tells me. "Now you can work out all day long. I wear mine all the time, while running errands. I suggest wearing them as often as possible, because doing anything is better than doing nothing."

And so I do. My feet feel heavy as I get into the car and drive (so much for the warning). I soon forget about them. By the time I get home (four hours later) and take them off, I feel so light it's as if I'm walking on air.

The next day I take them to show my personal trainer to ask what he thinks. He worries the shoes could hurt the knees if worn for a long period of time. Cohen says that's not a problem. "There is research out there backing up that the shoes don't cause undue strain on the knees. As an added safeguard, within the technology of how the weight is distributed across the feet, there is something that reduces the impact on joints."

The weights in each shoe range from half a pound to almost two pounds based on your shoe size. (My size six NGR shoes together weighed 1.8 lb.) The shoes will come in sizes six to 12, in lime and blue, for women, and sizes seven to 13 for men, in blue. Cohen will sell them, at first, only through the website. "When you sell shoes like this, you have to do it organically. You can't just have them in big stores, because salespeople have to know how to explain them."

After wearing the shoes for three days, I'm not sure if there are any results. They do however add two inches to my height. Evolution of fitness or not, for this reason alone, I'm willing to drag around on heavy feet. M



WHAT THEY GOT FOR IT ... A MILLION-POUND NOTE

One of only two £1,000,000 treasury notes left in existence, the document was issued in 1948 by the British treasury as part of the postwar plan to reconstruct Europe. Valid for only six weeks, it was the highest denominated currency note ever issued in Britain. Because they're not negotiable, the notes are of interest only to collectors. Last week, one such collector bought it at auction for $150,000



RESURRECTING MADELINE 50 years later wasn't easy. Marciano studied his grandfather's drawings, even tracing over them as practice

Wait, that looks like . . . Madeline?

The beloved children's book icon returns, in a charming new work by its creator's grandson

From an old house in Paris / that was covered with vines / left twelve little girls / in two straight lines

BY BRIAN BETHUNE • The opening couplets in *Madeline and the Cats of Rome* set the tone sought by author John Bemelmans Marciano: almost, but not quite, exactly like his grandfather's work. The first of Ludwig Bemelmans's six books about Madeline—the youngest, spunkiest and most flamingly red-headed of those 12 girls—was an instant hit on its publication in 1939. By the time of his death in 1962, Bemelmans had established one of the most enduring and recognizable icons in children's literature. Three generations of parents have bought 11 million copies. And why not? There are beguiling full-page watercolours of European scenes, beautiful ink drawings and Bemelmans's skewed but charming rhymes. And then there's Madeline herself, as adorable as she is mysterious.

Madeline and her 11 unnamed companions live in a way so unfamiliar to her readers—together, without family, overseen by a woman dressed as a nun but addressed as Miss Clavel—she's still widely thought of as a French orphan. In fact she is an American, complete with parents and the decidedly prosaic surname of Fogg—given to her in a late story, Marciano believes, solely for the sake of the rhyme—who lives in a boarding school. She's modelled on Marciano's mother, Barbara. "Grandfather took her to Paris in 1938, when she was 2½," says Marciano from his home in Brooklyn. "I have photos showing her dressed just like Madeline." (As for the confusing Miss Clavel, Marciano helpfully explains that Bemelmans's own mother had gone to a boarding school in Germany run by an order of English nuns.)

Marciano, 38, a self-taught illustrator like his grandfather, never knew Bemelmans, but he was well aware of the perils of taking on a character with a mythology of her own. "I knew that people would really want it to look just like the original," when he contemplated creating the first new Madeline story in half a century. "And I also knew that was impossible." Close enough to be a loving tribute, not so close as to be a failed copy, was the aim. So Marciano studied Bemelmans's drawings to understand the scale he worked in, and used similar ink and pens. He even traced over copies of his grandfather's work "to get a feel for the number of strokes."

The plot was no problem. Miss Clavel and the girls go for a spring break in sunny Rome. They take in the Coliseum, the Spanish Steps and fountain after fountain. Madeline, no surprise, leaves the group and gets into trouble; in the end she saves the day, as well as a dozen homeless cats. Marciano had lived for years in Rome. "I loved the city and its light, and I love cats." (Rome is swarming with them, some 300,000 feral felines. In 2001 the city extended protection to the cats of the Coliseum, Forum and Torre Argentina, by declaring them part of the city's "bio-heritage.")

But the style was another matter. Marciano applied the same intense examination to his grandfather's text as to his art, and found it a far more maddening model to follow. "I spent a lot of time looking at the metre and the rhyme, a lot of time," he laughs. "Grandfather's first books were really sloppy, which wasn't something I thought I could get away with in reviews. So how to do it in his style? In the end, I just went with it—I like the imperfections, they feel alive." Marciano was quite right in his review prediction. "Awkward syntax and forced rhymes abound," huffed *Publishers Weekly*, seemingly unaware that for every exquisite *Miss Clavel ran fast and faster / To the scene of the disaster*, Bemelmans was capable of a clunker like *But Madeline said, 'Please don't molest us / Your menagerie does not interest us.'*

But a few grumpy critics aside, *The Cats of Rome* is a hit where it counts. On Madeline fan sites and female book blogs, the response has been enthusiastic. Publisher Penguin Books has printed 150,000 copies, and clearly hopes grandparents and parents with their own fond Madeline memories will pick one up this Christmas. Phyllis Simon, co-owner of Vancouver's Kidsbooks, thinks that's a sure thing. "The book has a lot of charm, a lovely look. It hits all the references in a way that resonates with the originals. Anyone who holds Madeline near and dear to their heart will love it." That emphatically includes Simon. "When I was a kid, I thought she was an orphan. I wanted to be an orphan, because her life looked so interesting." No writer—or his successor—could ask for more. M



FIMALLY, A BOOK ABOUT. . . BALKAM MEMORIES

Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, winner of the first Man Booker International Prize in 2005, began *Tha Siege* (Doubleday) in 1968, when his Maoist country, China's only ally in Europe, feared a Prague-style Soviet invasion. As paranoid dictator Enver Hoxha ordered thousands of concrete bunkers to be built, Kadare started writing about a 15th-century Turkish siege of an Albanian fortress. The brilliant result is a novel that's both historical and contemporary



CHUCK D of the group Public Enemy calls Canada's 'tha roughest border on tha planet. To me it resembles the Berlin Wall.'

Rappers' war with the border

Are artists like Public Enemy unfairly discriminated against by Canadian officials?

BY BRENDAN MURPHY • Over the last two decades, Public Enemy has established itself as one of rap's most influential and socially conscious acts. Even the Library of Congress has recognized its achievements. However, the group's front man, Chuck D, says there's one set of people whose respect he's still waiting on: the officers at the Canadian border. "We've had heavy security problems at the border since the 1990s," he says. "It's the roughest border on the planet. To me it resembles the Berlin Wall." Given that PE was the first hip-hop act to do extended world tours, he's not just analogizing. "I experienced having to be searched by cops and dogs coming through western Germany to go back to Berlin, and I'm here to tell you that that seemed more humane."

Those who regularly attend Canadian shows headlined by American rappers know that there's a good chance their favourite artists may not be there when the lights go up. If they are, chances are they're not happy. During this summer's Pemberton music festival, Jay-Z, one of the most recognizable figures in music today, complained about his experience on the way there.

American rappers are not the only ones who've noticed. Belly is a Palestinian-born, Ottawa-based rapper. A Juno-winning artist who plays on both sides of the border, he agrees with Chuck D. "I have an easier time getting into the States than getting back into my own country [Going into the U.S.] I haven't been pulled to the side in four or five years. In Canada, it's one out of two times that I'll have to spend an hour or two in Customs."

Toronto's REMG is Canada's largest "urban" music concert promoter. Since founding the company in 1993, Jonathan Ramos has been bringing some of the biggest names in rap and R&B to Canada. He explains the process. "There's two parts to it—work permits and immigration." According to Ramos, if the person is an internationally recognized musician, a work permit is often not necessary. "The problems come up at immigration," he says.

Since 2003, the border has been overseen by the Canadian Border Services Agency, an amalgamation of Canada Customs and personnel from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. David Garson, a senior partner of the Toronto law firm Guberman, Garson, Bush, who has been practising immigration law for over 15 years, explains that while Immigration and the CBSA do share duties, responsibilities and information, the border itself is the CBSA's.

In an email to *Maclean's* (before declining to answer further questions), a CSBA spokesperson wrote: "Several factors are used in determining admissibility into Canada, including involvement in criminal activity, or for security, health or financial reasons." According to Garson, it's most often for reasons of criminal activity. "Canada is very strict about criminality," says Garson. "If you have a conviction that could have been proceeded upon indictably in Canada, then that person is inadmissible."

While the U.S. has a petty offence exemption, Canada does not. "It could be one charge," says Garson. "You may have entertainers coming to Canada that have had a DUI or a minor possession charge and, if that's the case, then they're deemed inadmissible." Ramos points out that it's frequently not even the musicians themselves who are the problem. "It's often someone in the entourage. Sometimes they're essential to the show, which means it can't happen, and sometimes they aren't."

Previously called a "minister's pardon," the temporary resident permit is how someone deemed inadmissible can enter the country. While both Ramos and Garson stress that this is best handled well in advance, it can be done at the port of entry. "There's a lot of discretion given to the officer at the border," says Garson.

Since Chuck D and Belly are both able to cross the border, the issue for them is their treatment while there. "I definitely think that if you're dressed as the profile of what a rapper is, they pick on that," says Belly. "And no matter what they say, you go into the side room at Customs and it's filled with people of ethnic backgrounds."

For Ramos, there are several popular artists he has avoided working with because they're not likely to make it over the border. But as for discrimination against rappers themselves? "I think there's a problem with the system, but I doubt that rappers are being targeted for being rappers." M

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CHOLEWA



BENJI MUGMES. . . HAS SOMETHIMG TO SAY

You had a date with ma on April 17 / I showed up at tha Dairy Queen / Where we were supposad to maat / I got thare at 4:53, we were supposad to meet at five / I had a Butterfingar Blizzard and some fries / Whan you didn't show up I got worried that you might hava had a wreck / But some friends of mine said they saw you puking off a parking dack—You Stood Ma Up from Benji Hughes's naw album, *A Love Extrema*

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PHOTO: RAPHY JEFF HARRIS

MUMBLECORE Rebecca Kohler and Jason Rehal improvise a scene in one of the first Canadian contributions to the burgeoning film genre

Watching twentysomethings talk

A new film genre features inarticulate non-actors, but Hollywood's paying attention

BY JORDAN TIMM • A late summer evening in a downtown Toronto apartment finds two people holding digital video cameras while another wields a boom microphone. One small light adds a little brightness to the scene playing out for the cameras: a pair of amateur actors sitting on a couch with a laptop computer, improvising dialogue about the Internet meme LOLcats. The film's working title is *No Heart Feelings*. Glance at the set and it's your standard-issue amateur movie shoot. Squint a little harder and you're seeing one of the first Canadian contributions to a burgeoning indie film genre self-deprecatingly called mumblecore.

While mumblecore doesn't have a strict definition or dogma, there are a few traits common to the films that have earned the label: Ultra-low budget. Non-professional actors. Improv. Not much in the way of narrative arc. Instead, a series of vignettes—talky social scenarios in the lives of hipsters in their 20s as they deal with relationships and struggle to communicate via the self-consciously inarticulate manner that's coming to define their generation.

"A friend of mine calls it 'the pathetic aesthetic,'" says Sarah Lazarovic, one of the three writers-slash-directors-slash-crew members working on *No Heart Feelings*, a depiction of a twentysomething love triangle. She and partners Ryan Noth and Geoff Morrison have just wrapped shooting on a film that ticks off most of the boxes on the mumblecore check list. Instead of actors, they cast friends and friends of friends. They used consumer-level video equipment—what they didn't already own, they rented. They wrecked two wireless microphone transmitters during the filming of a canoeing scene, says Morrison. "And that was 10 per cent of our budget."

Despite the low budgets, it's not fair to call the genre pathetic. It's produced a few remarkable films, *Mutual Appreciation* among the most notable. The handiwork of a young Harvard grad named Andrew Bujalski, the 2005 film revolved around the lives of four young Brooklyn residents. There were moments in the film—such as a scene where one character's eyes were obscured by the set's lights reflecting on the lenses of his glasses—that nakedly betrayed its amateur status. But there was a high level of craft evident behind the camera, and the movie turned heads. "I remember watching it and thinking that I've never seen a better-acted film," Morrison says.

The name "mumblecore" gained currency after Bujalski used it jokingly in a 2005 interview. His debut film, *Funny Ha Ha*, had just been released on DVD and *Mutual Appreciation* had earned a screening at the SXSW Film Festival in Austin, Texas. That year's festival featured several movies that seemed of a kind with *Mutual Appreciation*. There was talk of a new movement in American filmmaking, bolstered by the invention of a catchy name with which to brand it.

Bujalski's films were among the dozen mumblecore features that comprised a 2007 retrospective of the genre called "Generation DIY: The New Talkies," screened by New York's IFC Center. Since the films had achieved little in terms of theatrical release, the IFC showcase crucially introduced the genre to a wider audience. Members of the mumblecore like writer/directors Jay and Mark Duplass—the brothers who made 2005's canonical *The Puffy Chair*—found doors opening for them; their new feature *Baghead*, a sort of mumblecore horror flick, screened at this year's Sundance Festival and earned a distribution deal from Sony Classics. And Bujalski is currently working on a screenplay for Paramount.

If it seems like there's now more of a chance for filmmakers working within the limitations faced (or chosen) by the mumblecore auteurs, thank the very thing that provides thematic material for so many of their films: the Internet. It's provided a means for cinephiles to network, to learn about, and get their hands on—and buzz about—films that won't be showing up at the local megaplex. That's how the *No Heart Feelings* gang became mumblecore devotees in the first place. "I ordered *Funny Ha Ha* from Andrew Bujalski," Lazarovic says. "He didn't have distribution. You sent him $15, he sent you the DVD."

Whatever the stylistic quirks of the films, they're ultimately works by people who want their stories to be heard—which is one reason the genre's filmmakers are leery of the name. Says Noth of *No Heart Feelings*, "We didn't want it to be mumbly…." Lazarovic chimes in: "We wanted it to be articulate." M



STOP THE PRESSES COACHING FOOLS

"A story misquoted Rice University football coach David Bailiff as using the word 'fools' when he actually said 'fulls' in reference to his players. His quote about the similarities between coaching at Rice and at Texas State University-San Marcos should have read: 'The difference is there are 85 fulls (scholarships) here and there are only 63 at Texas State.'"—*Austin American-Statesman*

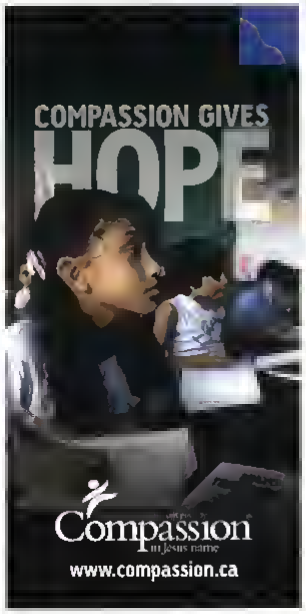
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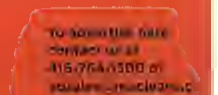
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MAKE SENSE OF IT ALL

Playboy is losing its shirt—and not in the good way



SCOTT FESCHUK

Forget the credit panic and sinking house prices. Ignore the melting ice caps and soaring food prices. Want a real sign that the apocalypse is imminent?

Playboy is losing its shirt, and not in the good way where there are sometimes twins involved.

Yes, *that* Playboy. You might ask yourself: how does a company lose a million bucks a month publishing pictures of naked ladies? Have futures contracts for garter belts skyrocketed? Has the cartel controlling the production of silicone gel scaled back implant production? Did Charlie Sheen allow his 2,000 subscriptions to lapse?

What matters is that the stock of Playboy Enterprises Inc. is in free fall—and even the company's iconic founder is not immune to the effects of the crisis. Word is that Hugh Hefner has been forced to downsize his harem of fake-blond, fake-breasted ladies, scale back the number of parties he throws at Playboy Mansion, and—in a sign that the situation is truly dire—get dressed for the first time since 1978.

(On the bright side, the sudden dearth of social events has allowed maintenance staff to finally clean out the grotto, Playboy's age-old symbol of carnal debauchery, where they found a variety of discarded swimsuits and Landers sisters.*)

How bad are things? Here are a few financial snapshots—translated from the tortured language of corporate reports to simple English—that give a sense of the state of affairs at Playboy.

Playboy: "Revenues decreased $12.3 million, or 14 per cent, for the quarter.... Our publishing and domestic entertainment businesses continue to face unprecedented change in the way consumers access and use media content."

Translation: The so-called "Internet" is giving away boobies for free.

Playboy: "At June 30, 2008, we had $25.6 million in cash and cash equivalents."

Translation: "Cash equivalents" include Hugh Hefner's naughty bits, which were dipped in bronze in 1983 and carry a scrap-metal value of $37.

Playboy: "We believe we are making good strategic progress in streamlining our operations and improving the future performance [through] reductions in overhead."

Translation: All Playmates now required to arrive at photo shoot pre-airbrushed.

TO THE YOUNG, Playboy's decline may seem inconsequential. After all, Hugh Hefner is these days little more than the personification of perversion. He's the world's dirtiest old man—a creepy, Viagra-fuelled octogenarian lamely pawing at buxom young ladies and... wait, when I type it, it sounds like a bad thing.

But for the longest time, Hef was the epitome of cool, an icon of success and sophistication, a testament to the power of the human spirit and the resilience of the human penis.

Hefner started *Playboy* magazine in 1953 with only $8,000 (borrowed from his mom) and an erection (presumably his own). Over the decades, he had a profound impact on American culture, in that contributing to the destruction of something is technically "a profound impact." Rich, respected, surrounded at all times by busty lady friends, Hefner bestrode the world like a smoking-jacketed colossus. Men wanted to be him. Women wanted to be on him.

But Hef is now in his dotage, one of the few men in America who can credibly refer to John McCain as "a whippersnapper." And the company he built—run today by his daughter—is struggling to adapt to a world in which nudity, once rare and tantalizing and hidden inside my tree fort, is served up nightly by drunken young starlets clumsily exiting their luxury automobiles.

How desperate is Playboy? So desperate that it's actually starting up a gay male video-on-demand service in the United States. Playboy going gay—someone had better tell Hef before he discovers the hard way that that's not Miss February in the hot tub.

To be fair, Playboy is also starting up a heterosexual video-on-demand service, which it says will "focus on real people in unusual or novel sexually oriented situations." Question: in the age of the Internet, what could possibly qualify as a "novel" sexually oriented situation? Sex while pole-vaulting over a tank of sharks and the sharks are dressed as the Village People and also the sharks are doing it? Would that qualify as novel? Because I just happen to have a screenplay here with me if you want to take a—no, of course, you're a busy man, Mr. Spielberg. I'll just finish making your Orange Julius.



He was testament to the power of the human spirit, and the resilience of the human penis

The bottom line is, nothing short of a cover featuring Sarah Palin, Tina Fey and the words "naked together" could likely revive the fortunes of *Playboy*. And that's weirdly kind of sad. The world has passed Hugh Hefner by.

And gentlemen, I ask of you: if Hef is doomed, what hope can there be for any of us for the future or the possibility that the maid might show up without pants? M

*Reference incomprehensible to anyone under the age of 38.

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THE END

Floyd Walter Taylor

1922-2008

He was a tenacious investigator with the Alberta ombudsman who lived to help the vulnerable

Floyd Walter Taylor was born at home in Warspite, Alta., about 100 km northeast of Edmonton, in the middle of a snowstorm on March 17, 1922. He was the second child of Hilda, a homemaker, and Walter, a grain buyer with the Alberta Wheat Pool, who was out with a horse and cutter searching for a doctor and missed his birth. Years later, Floyd's sister Margaret, who was four years older, would joke that Floyd was too impatient to wait for medical help. She also recalled that, as a baby, Floyd once rolled off a table; she had been told to watch him and didn't. Still, she remembered pulling the little blond boy around in his red wagon without incident in the summer and pushing him on his sled, an Eaton's Flyer, in the winter. Floyd grew up in the central Alberta village of Elnora, where he played hockey and took piano lessons, learning to pound out one song, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*. From his earliest days, he had a sweet tooth; whenever the children went berry picking, he ate more than he put in his pail.



Floyd was an intelligent, busy child who didn't share his sister's love for school. once when their schoolhouse burned to the ground, he laughed with glee while she cried. After Grade 11, he moved to Calgary to take an automotive course. He was just 20, tall and handsome, when he joined the Royal Canadian Navy, serving for three years on the HMCS Prince Robert, an armed merchant cruiser that escorted troop and supply ships between England, Italy and North Africa during the Second World War. Short of allowing that he saw a lot of action and often had to stay up all night on watch, he rarely talked about his experiences, although they stirred a profound sense of nationalism. After the war, Floyd met the love of his life, schoolteacher Mildred Larsen, on a bus trip home. He asked to sit beside her. They were married in Calgary on April 19, 1946.

Like his dad before him, Floyd first worked as a grain buyer, while Mildred taught school. Their first child, Floyd Scott, was born in 1950, followed by daughters Suzanne and Lynda, born 13 months apart in 1956 and 1957 and often dressed as twins. In those days, Floyd "did a lot of shifting around," Lynda says. He ran a Texaco station and a used car lot. He went into the furniture business and sold life insurance. In 1965, he found a job that suited him with the public trustee's office, managing the financial affairs of the vulnerable, Lynda says, "such as children whose parents died without a will." He liked the investigative part of the work, she says. "And he liked helping people." From there, Floyd moved to the Alberta ombudsman's office in 1974, investigating complaints from the public about unfair treatment by government departments including social services and health. "He looked into all kinds of complaints," Lynda says. "At one point he investigated two psychiatric hospitals."

Floyd was honest and impartial, Lynda says. "And he was tenacious. If he got into a project, he didn't let it go until it was finished." He liked the work so much that when he retired in 1984, he started his own private investigation company. He also helped his daughter Suzanne build her high-end fashion store in Edmonton. "He was entrepreneurial," Suzanne says. Adds Lynda, "He could never sit still for more than 10 minutes."

As the years passed, Mildred began to suffer from a number of health problems. Floyd carried trays of food to her in bed and vacuumed the house, sometimes to the strains of *Rhinestone Cowboy* on the stereo. Soon he began to suffer from his own illnesses. After major surgery for an abdominal aortic aneurysm in 2003 and a car accident in 2004, he started to act oddly. Mildred would sometimes find him in the kitchen late at night devouring ice cream. And he started to wander. In 2005, he was diagnosed with vascular dementia, possibly as a result of oxygen deprivation during the operation. On Sept. 19, 2007, Lynda's two little dogs, Pandy and Bob, creatures Floyd had treated almost like his children, rushed to greet him on a visit to her home. Startled, he fell and broke his hip. On Dec. 21, at age 85, he was admitted to the Kipnes Centre for Veterans in Edmonton, the very kind of government-run facility he once investigated. There, Floyd still showed signs of his earlier charm. "I could run a mile, jump a stile and drink a case of beer," he often said.

On Sept. 12, according to the family, Floyd went to his unit's communal kitchen to get a midnight snack. He found a jug of industrial strength dishwashing soap that contained lye and, perhaps thinking it was juice, poured some of the red liquid into a container and drank. He was so severely burned internally that he died at the Misericordia Community Hospital four days later. His death is under investigation by Alberta Health Services.

BY BARBARA RIGHTON

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